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*The cover image is of an ancient sculpture dated around the mid-fifth millennium BC, found in Tirpești, Moldavia.

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On Women's Freedom: An Examination of Millian and Hegelian Philosophy

LISA PATTERSON (BONIN)*

THE PURPOSE OF this essay is to examine how and to what extent freedom is realised by women within the framework of Hegelian and Millian thought. Mill's individualistic, negative freedom¹ presents an interesting contrast to Hegel's understanding of freedom as the transcendence of individuality and the recognition of one's interdependence on and interconnectedness with the whole of society and state. A literal reading of their respective philosophies suggests that Mill avidly endorses women's freedom while Hegel substantively limits it. Critical analysis and a broader understanding of their theories, however, demonstrates that the reverse may be true. Both Mill and Hegel definitively limit women's freedom through the institution of the family, however, the Hegelian conception of freedom has the potential to provide for women's transcendence of the family, and for a richer, more complete freedom.

According to Mill, freedom is the absence of social and governmental limitations on an individual's thought, expression and action. Freedom is realised through the development of a sphere of

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independence in which the individual is free to live his/her life in the manner which is freely chosen, without state or social interference, except insofar as one's actions cause harm to others. Furthermore, freedom is the guarantor of human progress, for one is only able to develop one's higher capacities and discover what is best through fully realised thought, expression, and action. It is clear that, for Mill, freedom is not an end of itself, but rather, it is the means to the ultimate end, which is human happiness. Millian freedom is, therefore, utilitarian in nature.

Like Mill, Hegel also sees freedom in terms of human progress. Quite contrary to Mill though, freedom for Hegel is not only an end in itself, but is also the ultimate end. It is realised through the development and progression of human consciousness in the world. Unlike Millian freedom, Hegelian freedom is not rooted in the inherently self-interested concept of utility. Rather, freedom is realised through the transcendence of individuality and the realisation of the importance of one's interconnectedness with, and interdependence on, the broader social, political and economic community.

Mill's argument for the freedom of women is two-fold. He begins by criticising the contemporary understanding of women as the weaker sex, discrediting the traditional justifications for the subjection of women. Mill then builds a constructive argument, rooted in utilitarianism, which demonstrates why the emancipation of women is not only desirable, but is also incumbent upon society.

In *The Subjection of Women*, Mill argues that women are not free. Rather, they are legally and socially subordinated to the male sex. This, in his view, is of serious concern: "the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes, [namely the] subordination of one sex to the other, is wrong in itself...and it ought to be replaced by a principle of equality" (Mill 471). Mill does not argue directly for women's freedom here, however, the argument for women's freedom is implicit in his argument for equality. Given Mill's understanding of freedom as the absence of social and legal limitations, equality translates into freedom for women because bringing equality about necessarily entails the removal of the *de facto* and *de jure* barriers which have as their object or effect the subordination of women.²

One cannot be free so long as there are legal and social norms which limit one's thought, expression and action. Mill argues that

women are not free precisely because legal and social norms subordinate them to men (Mill 503-510).³ The justification for this subjection of women to men is said to lie in the natural differences between the sexes, manifest in women's relative weakness and proclivity to emotion, and in men's contrasting strength and higher intelligence. Mill's purpose in *The Subjection of Women* is to discredit this argument from nature, and to demonstrate that women should be free and equal.

Mill maintains that the argument from nature fails to justify the subordination of women, because it is impossible to know "the nature of the two sexes, as long as they have only been seen in their present relation to one another" (Mill 493). He further demonstrates the failure of the argument from nature by alluding to the number of firm and vigorous queens who have been "distinguished by merits the most opposite to the imaginary conventional character of women" (Mill 529). Consequently, Mill contends that the apparent differences between the sexes are "eminently artificial" (Mill 493), the outcome of socialisation and indoctrination, rather than the result of any inherent qualities. Moreover, even if differences do exist between the sexes, it makes no sense to limit the freedom of women: what women by nature cannot do they will not do in any case, and what they can do, but "not so well as the men who are their competitors, competition [will] suffice to exclude them" (Mill 499). Not having found a rational justification for the limitations placed on women which subordinate them to men, Mill argues that women are both capable and deserving of full equality, and freedom. Women's freedom will be actualised when the social and legal limitations on her thought, expression and action are eliminated.

It is at this point that Mill introduces his constructive argument in favour of women's freedom. His underlying justification for the equality of women is utilitarian: when women are free their happiness and well being are immeasurably improved (Mill 576). More importantly, however, the well being of all of society is also greatly improved.

[The] benefit to be expected from giving to women the free use of their faculties, by leaving them the free choice of their employments, and opening to them the same fields of occupation and the same prizes and encouragements as to other human beings, would be that of doubling the mass of mental faculties available for the higher service of humanity. (Mill 561)

Thus, women's freedom is not only desirable, but more importantly, it is necessary to ensure the progress of human society.

However liberal and progressive Mill's position on the freedom of women may appear, it is not without significant flaws. To the extent that his argument seems obvious and rational to those living in a relatively free and equal liberal society, it is easy to overlook these flaws. One must avoid this temptation, because an examination of Mill's shortcomings reveals that women may be able to realise significantly less freedom than is accommodated by his argument.

Despite his insistence that women must be free and equal, Mill nevertheless retains a very traditional understanding of a woman's role in the family:

Like a man when he chooses a profession, so, when a woman marries, it may in general be understood that she makes choice of the management of a household, and the bringing up of a family ... (Mill 523)

Clearly, on Mill's account, once women enter familial life they must assume a particular role. However, this position suggests a definitive limitation of women's freedom. Moreover, it suggests that women cannot be free and at the same time have a family, because family life clearly limits the extent to which a woman can exercise her freedom to choose.⁴

This qualification of woman's freedom is inconsistent with Mill's general argument for freedom, in which he argues for the removal of all social and legal limitations on thought, expression and action. The suggestion that a woman's freedom should be limited upon choosing to participate in a particular social institution is inconsistent with this understanding of freedom. This internal discrepancy in Mill's argument raises a question as to the actual extent of women's freedom. This tension in Mill's theory may be resolved if we assume that Mill simply took for granted the conventional division of labour within the family because of his traditional understanding of woman as the primary care giver. However, given the radical and progressive nature of his broader argument for freedom in general and for the equality of women in particular, it does not seem plausible that this aberration is a mere oversight.

In addition to the above anomaly, Mill's argument for women's freedom is further undermined by his intense focus on individuality and

negative liberty. Insofar as women are subordinated, and made “un-free” by the conventional, but misinformed perceptions about their inferiority within society, it is necessary that those perceptions be changed in order for women to realise freedom. This change, however, is very likely to require positive action. Among other things, this may include the enactment of laws affirming and guaranteeing the equality of man and woman; the development of educational programmes, the purpose of which is to eliminate discrimination and to change attitudes in society; and the development of a social infrastructure to take on certain familial roles such as child day-care. Furthermore, even if women are able to achieve freedom without positive action, which is highly unlikely, it seems that it would be a hollow freedom. Freedom can only have real meaning within the context of social relationships and interactions.⁵ However, Mill’s highly individualistic conception of freedom alienates women from the broader social identities which give them a sense of belonging, of acceptance and of self-worth. To the extent that Millian freedom requires a removal of the ‘ties that bind’, it seems that woman can never enjoy a rich and full freedom. As I will illustrate below, it is precisely this limitation which Hegelian freedom has the potential to overcome.

In the limited consideration Hegel gives to the subject, he is very clear that women’s freedom is fundamentally limited because women “[have their] substantive destiny in the family”(Hegel 114). Therefore, women’s freedom must be limited by the family in its development. However, it is important to note that Hegel has an entirely different conception of family than does Mill. Whereas for Mill, the family is a social construct in which women are constrained by virtue of their duty to preserve and sustain general utility, for Hegel, the family involves the transcendence of individuality and is hence a sphere in which both men and women are equal and committed to the betterment of their union.

Precisely like those whom Mill argues against, Hegel roots woman’s limited development in inherent gender differences. Hegel argues that “in relation to externality, [man] is powerful and active, [whereas woman] is passive and subjective”(Hegel 114). Thus, Hegel considers it rational that men have their substantive life in the state, in learning, in labour and in struggle with the external world, while women have their substantive end in the family, the sphere of emotion and immediacy:

Women are capable of education, but they are not made for activities which demand a universal faculty such as the more advanced sciences, philosophy, and certain forms of artistic production...The difference between men and women is like that between animals and plants. Men correspond to animals, while women correspond to plants because their development is more placid and the principle that underlies it is the rather vague unity of feeling ... [W]omen regulate their actions not by the demands of universality but by arbitrary inclinations and opinions ... Manhood, on the other hand, [requires] the stress of thought and much technical exertion. (Hegel 263-264)

It is clear that, for Hegel, women do not have the capacity for the degree of rational consciousness that is required to function at the level of the state.

Insofar as the epitome of human freedom is the realisation of one's interconnectedness with the larger community that is the states, and insofar as women are incapable of the consciousness which this realisation requires, one might be tempted to argue that the Hegelian woman is not free. However, for Hegel, women are indeed free. Women have developed the full extent of the freedom of which they are capable. That they are incapable of the highest human freedom does not make women "un-free", because they remain free wills, conscious of their interconnectedness with the broader community that is their family. Thus, it is not that women are "un-free", it is just that they cannot be more free.

What is curious about Hegel's position on women is the seemingly gender neutral development of freedom to this point. It seems inconsistent with the concept of freedom as the progress of reason to profess a definitive end to this development for an entire class of people. Perhaps this paradox can be resolved if we consider that, for Hegel, philosophy is the understanding of what is, and not the profession of what ought to be (Hegel 10). It is likely that in Hegel's time women were generally limited to participation in the family, if not because of inherent characteristics, then because of social structures which operated on the assumption of inherent gender differences. Hegel's error may have been in failing to realise that the characteristics which substantively differentiated women from men were artificial, rather than inherent.

However, Hegel also professes a substantive end to men's consciousness. Though men are more free than women, men's consciousness has its end in the state. Yet, today, it is manifest that consciousness transcends the state to embrace the larger global community. This is evidenced by the development of international organisations and by the general interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals in the era of globalisation.

Thus, it seems that Hegel's error was two-fold. On the one hand he failed to realise that gender-roles were artificial rather than inherent. On the other hand, it appears he was mistaken in his belief that human consciousness could and had reached a substantive end. If men's freedom transcends the realm of the state then it is also logical to assume that women's freedom is not inherently rooted in realm of the family, but rather has the potential to continue to develop. If it is possible for men to transcend the ultimate Hegelian end of the state, it seems logical that women can transcend the limited end of the family. If indeed this is true, then on Hegel's own conception of freedom, women can be fully free, alongside men, for there is nothing today which suggests that women are inherently limited in their development of consciousness and reason.

Thus, one can see that the Hegelian and the Millian conceptions of women's freedom are quite different. For Mill, women's freedom is realised through the removal of social and state limitations on her thought, expression and action. For Hegel, on the other hand, women's freedom involves the transcendence of individuality and the realisation and acceptance of their role in the broader collectivity. Nonetheless, both Hegel and Mill definitively limit women's freedom through the institution of the family. For Mill, women are not limited *to* the sphere of the family, for they are free to pursue any activity, professional or personal, they desire. Nevertheless, women are limited *in* the sphere of the family, for once they choose family life they are committed to a specific role, namely that of mother and housewife. For Hegel, on the other hand, women are limited both *to* and *in* the family. His justification for this limitation rests on an appeal to the inherent emotional characteristics of women.

Nevertheless, the Hegelian framework of freedom seems to provide more potential for women to achieve a fuller freedom than the Millian framework of negative, individual liberty permits. As noted earlier, Mill's consistent focus on individuality and on negative liberty

significantly limit the development of women's freedom. For freedom to have any real meaning it must be experienced within the context of a broader collectivity. Mill's individualism, however, alienates women from the social interdependencies which give substance to their life. On the other hand, Hegel embraces, as fundamental to freedom, the very interdependence and social orientation which Mill minimises. For Hegel, one cannot be fully free until one has learned to transcend the purely individual, and to accept and embrace the fact that one is but a component of a larger whole. To the extent that real freedom cannot be experienced in abstraction from social interactions it seems, therefore, that the Hegelian understanding of freedom, as the progression of conscious participation in social life, provides a much more complete freedom for women than could ever be realised on a purely individual basis.

To reach this conclusion, though, we must assume that Hegel is mistaken in his belief that there is a determinate end to the progress of human consciousness, and hence of human freedom. The assumption that human freedom does not have a definitive end, however, raises a fundamental question: can freedom ever be fully and completely realised? The answer is yes and no. Insofar as the definitions of society continue to expand in the era of globalisation and increased mobility, the progression of consciousness through continuing development of new social interactions and interdependencies must also continue to expand. As freedom is inherently connected to social progress, either as the progress of human happiness (as is the case for Mill) or as the progression of social consciousness (as is the case for Hegel), it too must expand. Furthermore, given the complexity of the global polity, it seems illogical to assume that human social progress is inherently finite. Insofar as human development may be infinite, and insofar as infinity has no end-point, it may be that the end of (or complete) freedom can never be realised.

Nevertheless, within a specific time and space, a given society, or set of social relations, will have specific boundaries. To the extent that we are capable of developing the highest level of consciousness which those boundaries permit, full freedom is indeed attainable. To the extent that Hegel is concerned with the progression of reason and consciousness within the context of actual, as opposed to potential, human society, we can assume that full freedom can and will be realised.⁶ Although the boundaries of Hegelian society prevented

women from achieving full freedom, the removal of those limitations in present day society indicates that women can and will achieve full freedom, alongside men.

One can rest assured that freedom will continue to have meaning even if it does not have a definitive end. While Mill is decidedly more progressive than Hegel on the specific issue of women's liberty, the internal flaws in Mill's theory limit the development of women's freedom to a purely individualistic and negative freedom. Hegel, on the other hand, substantively limits women's freedom to the family. However, a broader understanding of Hegel's conception of freedom, as the development of reason and consciousness in the world, shows it to be a framework within which women may develop a richer, more complete freedom. Thus, the Hegelian conception of social freedom holds more potential for the realisation by women of a fuller freedom than does the Millian conception of individualised freedom.

Notes

¹ Negative freedom "means not being obstructed by others in doing whatever one might wish to do." Freedom of speech, for example, is a negative freedom because it entails the absence of government regulation on one's speech. This is contrasted with positive Freedom, which consists of the "power to control or participate in public decisions, including the decision how far to curtail negative [freedom]" (Ronald Dworkin, "Two Concepts of Liberty", in David Dyzenhaus and Arthur Ripstein (eds.) *Law and Morality: Readings in Legal Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) p.658. One will note that negative freedom is freedom 'from', whereas positive freedom is freedom 'to'.

² This argument presupposes, of course, that the men with whom equality is sought are free. For the purposes of this paper I am making that assumption.

³ For example, women are required to give up all property to men in marriage, and men are permitted to treat their wives, if not as property, then at least as less than full persons. Indeed, Mill equates a woman's position in marriage with slavery, denoting an entire lack of freedom.

⁴ One should note that limits are also placed on men upon entering family life. For example the man is expected to chose a profession so that he may support his family. However, men retain their freedom to choose their external relations, while women lose this capacity for choice outside of the family realm. It seems women must give up significantly more of their freedom upon

entering the family than must men. Women's freedom is thus limited absolutely, and relative to men.

⁵ While this is certainly Hegel's position, it is also, I believe, independently true, and I do not mean to critique Mill on purely Hegelian terms. Freedom is an attribute like culture or language; without a society within which to exercise these attributes, they become meaningless. The last woman on earth is no more free than the Frenchman (as the last man on earth) is French. For attributes such as 'free' and 'French' to have meaning, they must be exercised in the context of social relations. Mill's failure to realise the importance of this is the fundamental flaw in his theory of freedom. I realise that this is a debatable conception of freedom and that there are valid, alternative understandings of freedom. Space does not permit a full discussion of the debate, and for the purposes of this paper I am assuming the above position.

⁶ In the potential for the development of full freedom I consider only Hegel, for I have already shown above that woman cannot achieve full and complete freedom within the Millian framework because therein she is limited to individuality and is hence alienated from the broader social relationships which give freedom meaning.

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Our Melancholy Fate

JON ZETTEL*

*To Ahab, for introducing me to my shadow, and to Jamie,
for introducing me to the bench.*

1.

I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED how many people would willingly choose this life. The omniscient voice of experience bluntly reminds us: "there will always be murderers, thieves, and liars amongst the people." The prophetic voice of innocence quietly whispers: "even the poorest life will dream dreams, see visions, and have amazing experiences." Do dreams compensate the harsh reality? Will the good outweigh the bad? Perhaps it is a cosmic blessing that none of us remember asking to be born in the first place.

Nonetheless we are born - and this is nothing short of a miracle. For better or worse, those tiny feet, those delicate little fingers and tender cheeks come into the world to the beat of a fragile heart. The pain of labour leaves a mother completely exhausted, yet she smiles effortlessly at the sight of her new-born child. At the very moment of a child's first breath time stops. What does the future hold for the babe in arms? The air whispers innocence as we declare, "The human soul is a far country that cannot be fully explored - everything is possible!"

**Jon Zettel has just completed the first year at the University of Toronto. He is the second of nine children, and was raised in Pinkerton Ontario, a small town with the population of only one hundred. Sometimes he just has to laugh like hell."*

2.

Last night I had a dream that I was standing at the edge of a chasm. I could not see to the bottom, nor could I see anyway around it. My only avenue of passage was a wooden bridge linking the two sides. Safely reaching the other side, I saw another chasm and another bridge. It soon became apparent that the combination of bridges and chasms went on in both directions forever.

I came across a man fishing off one of the bridges. "What do you expect to catch? Is there any water down there?" I asked.

"Dunno," he said.

"Who made these bridges?" I questioned.

"Minds make the bridges," he said plainly.

Some men carrying clubs appeared and dragged the fisherman away.

"Where are you taking him?" I screamed.

"To school, to teach him bridge-making."

Some students wearing uniforms marched past me as I gazed down into the void. In unison they chanted the multiplication table. Further along in monotone they spoke the poem that goes, "Our Father who art in Heaven ..." I could see their leader was pleased.

It was then that I came across a man who looked as though he was going to jump off the bridge.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"Dreaming," he said.

"Of what?"

"Possibilities."

"But it will be suicide if you jump."

"It's a possibility."

"Are you going to jump?" I asked.

"No, I am just dreaming."

"When will you wake up?"

"When I jump, I suppose."

3.

My little sister turned 19 recently. I called her to wish her a happy birthday. During our conversation she told me that she would not be attending the University of Toronto as planned after graduation. I told her that was a marvellous idea. Apparently everyone else in her life - teachers, parents and peers - think it will undoubtedly ruin her.

She wanted me to tell her what she ought to do instead of going to school. I suggested that she should do whatever she dreamed of doing.

"I can't do *that*," she said.

"Why not?" I asked not knowing exactly what *that* was.

"I am too afraid."

"But that's what makes life so exciting."

4.

I was reading Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince* on the steps to the Larkin Building. The story began to describe how the Prince looked over the village. It was after these first few lines that I was overcome with the feeling that someone was watching me. When I raised my head from the book I noticed a swallow sitting next to me. At first I was startled, and then I reached out my hand to see if it might perch on my fingers. The swallow bit me lightly on the fingertip and flew away. A little shaken up, I returned to reading the story.

The story continued to describe how a swallow came to the aid of the happy prince by taking the gems that the prince held down into the village. I had never read the story before, and was overwhelmed by the strange coincidence.

That same day I made my first drawing. I titled it, "The Prince." I knew it was finished because my pen ran out of ink.

Recently I told this story to a friend. She wondered why nothing strange ever happened to her. "What are you talking about?" I asked. "Weird things happen to you all the time. Look at this right now: us here, drinking coffee. Isn't it the strangest thing you've seen?"

5.

The human soul is a far reaching country: every life is unique and special. There are wonderful sights to see, amazing foods to taste, and beautiful music to dance to. We can tell each other stories, and watch each other grow. Each day the sun rises to shine light on new opportunities. Still I wonder how many people would willingly choose this life.

6.

Once upon a time, there was a man who was caught cheating on his wife. Consumed with anger his wife clubbed him over the head with a baseball bat, and while he laid unconscious she put him in a box and shipped him to the middle of the desert. When the man awoke he

could not remember who he was, or where he had come from. Apparently the blow to his head had given him amnesia.

Inside the box it was dark and the man could not see a thing. Panic set in and the man tried desperately to break free. He kicked a hole in the side of the box, and climbed out onto the hot desert sand. The shock of what he saw forced him to retreat back into the box. He wished that he had not kicked a hole in the side of the box, and so he took off his shirt and held it over the hole. The man came to love the box, and vowed never to leave it.

One day the wind blew sand into his box, and the man began to hate the wind. "Do not worry," the man told the box, "I would rather die than leave you. The wretched wind can fill you with sand and I will not leave you." But the wind blew harder, and with it came the smell of delicious foods from far away lands. The man's hatred for the wind led him to conclude that she must be trying to tempt him away from the cardboard box.

Days passed, and the man became frustrated. "I clean you each day," he told the box, "and each day I give you my love, but not once have you told me that you love me." The box remained silent, for it knew that it was a box and could not love the man. The man became angry with the box, and decided that he would stop loving the box to teach it a lesson. "What would you be without me?" he asked. The box remained silent, for it knew that it was a box and would always be a box.

Together the man and the box sat in silence, until the wind came again. This time the wind brought music and laughter into the silent box. The man was glad that the wind had come since his love for the box had waned. No longer was he concerned with his daily chores of devotion and cleanliness.

For a long time the man sat and listened, while the sand continued to pile up inside the box. Eventually the box was so full of sand that the man could hardly breath. "What good are you?" the man asked the box. "I am going to leave you today, and follow the wind for she fills my heart with joy." And with that the man climbed out of his box onto the hot desert sand.

Seeing the man made the wind very distressed. "I can see in your eyes," she wailed, "that you are a fickle creature. If I bring you sweet scents, and beautiful concerts, it is certain that you will fall in love with me. However, this love will be like your love for the box and

will eventually die." With that the wind stopped blowing, for she knew that she was the wind and could choose her own path.

When the wind stopped blowing the man was alone. He looked to the box, and for the first time noticed that in bold red printing was a single word. Brushing the sand away the man read this: "Fragile."

7.

I can remember quite clearly the day that I told my father that there were voices inside my head. I was only 6, it was sunny, and I was helping him collect twigs off the lawn. The voices were frightening to me, so it was much to my surprise that he considered it to be a good thing to have voices in your head. He told me that this was a sign that I was becoming an individual - a person of my own. He said that I was gaining the ability to choose my actions. One of the voices, he said, would try to lead me astray and do wrong actions. Another voice, the voice I ought to listen, would lead me to do right actions. He said that I would grow up to be a good man if I always followed the right voice.

"But dad, how do I know which voice is right and which one is wrong?"

"Well now, that's a *good* question," he said. "I think that you already know, and if you watch the world carefully and listen to your heart you will soon realise what is right and wrong."

Things were *different* after that.

8.

"And what is good, Phaedrus, and what is not good - need we ask anyone to tell us these things?"¹

9.

"Then the Lord God said, now the man has become like one of us and has knowledge of what is good and what is bad. So the Lord God sent him out of the Garden of Eden and made him cultivate the soil from which he had been formed."²

10.

The human soul is a far reaching country: there will always be murderers, thieves, and liars amongst the people. Indeed we come into this world crying, but these tears are nothing in comparison to future sorrows. Even the most sheltered life is not secure from the nightmares of human existence.

We may sit comfortable in our homes and see the images of poverty and war on the television. It all *seems* so very distant and unrelated. We learn to shut our eyes to the horrors that surround us. We learn that it is better to keep silent, to do our work, and to let *them* worry about it.

Listen: *what if they don't really give a shit?*

11.

"When the little prince arrived on the Earth, he was very much surprised not to see very many people."³

12.

Machiavelli would certainly agree that without the vital foundations set by a prince, culture could never flourish. Hobbes rationally deduces that it is in our best interest to obey. Dressed in their finest gowns, they speak from experience: there will always be murderers and thieves and liars amongst the people.⁴

We cannot ignore the wickedness of humanity, and must learn from it. The deathly mushroom cloud of Hiroshima, the choking smoke of Auschwitz, and the cold tyranny of the gulag, must be taken as prophetic omens of future sorrows. It is impossible to understand the world living in seclusion, via prime-time television, or from absolute faith in a dialectical genius. Locking oneself up in a box, or in one's own dream-world, will undoubtedly result in much the same devastation. Lest we forget.

With suspicious eyes, we look down at the babe in arms. Here lies our melancholy fate.

13.

Politics is a dirty word. It looms over us as a constant reminder that we are wicked creatures who do wicked things often without pause. Humans *need* politics. Without it we are doomed; with it we are forever scarred. If we trust that the babe in arms will always follow the right voice, we are left standing defenceless against the inevitable sorrows of the future. So we look down at the babe in arms and begin building our defences, but the walls of political defence signal trust decayed. They may allow the babe in arms to grow and keep us safe from tyranny, but it is only a momentary escape - all boundaries clearly mark a new land for exploration.

Machiavelli was a poet who believed that you cannot persuade those who do not listen. Assuredly the mob is deaf. There are no words to persuade men who do not listen. For Machiavelli there is no alternative, and politics is reduced to creative force and fraud. The foundations set by the glory-seeking prince are like the beauty of a rose: ultimately ephemeral. Fortune dictates cyclical history, inevitably reducing the prince to a pauper-poet.

Hobbes replaced poetry with science to create the ultimate paradox - the Leviathan, that 'Mortall God.'⁵ Logic, as perfected poetry, *forces* us to realise the necessity for politics. Running from the bleak state of nature painted by Hobbes, we have no choice but to live under the authority of the Leviathan. Without choice we are dehumanised; we are calculating machines that fear death and lust for the superfluous taste of material gain.

Communism promised us emancipation from politics, but when the Berlin Wall fell we only saw emancipation from tyranny.

We dare to dream of emancipation, happiness, and excellence. But do we *really* deserve these dreams?

The human soul is a far reaching country that cannot be contained. Indeed we have the Midas touch.⁶ It is our blessing and our curse. It is our melancholy fate.

14.

short step and a fall
out into traffic
a line of death possibilities
block your way from one side to the other

someone's holding the door for you
but you can't walk in
you can't edge past him
as he stands in the open doorway

move aside move aside swiftly
the current under moves your feet
pushing on toward the shining box
you call your home

move aside push it all away

back inside wipe and scrub decay
 decayed years decayed days decayed moments
 all gathered before you in tidy boxes

you can take that trust outside with you
 to wash again in the tepid rain
 but trust is nothing more than the hollow promise
 of something impossible dreamed into being

your lion's skin has lost its shine
 the lions in the corridor call you today

15.

At the sight of the Muses of Poetry at my bedside dictating words to accompany my tears, she [Philosophy] became angry.

"Who," she demanded, her piercing eyes alight with fire, "has allowed these hysterical sluts to approach this sick man's bedside? They have no medicine to ease his pains, only sweetened poisons to make them worse."⁷

16.

A thing at any particular moment in time is both negated and sublated by the next moment, and so the dance goes on.

17.

The philosopher must live dangerously. Take, for instance, that immediate certainty that one thinks. To this the philosopher will say, "Sir, it is improbable that you are mistaken, but why should it be the truth?"⁸ As if this were not enough of a hazard - the qualities that enable one to seek the truth uncompromisingly⁹ are the same qualities that give rise to the tyrant.¹⁰ This inescapable tension stands as a constant temptation for the philosopher; the tainted glory of political power shines brightly against the dusty path towards truth. And if, with all his strength he avoids social glories, the philosopher becomes easy prey for the hovering vultures. Socrates may have avoided the temptation of political power, but he could not avoid his hemlock. Nor could Christ escape his crucifixion. Such was their fate; such was their sacrifice.

Indeed, the new philosopher must learn to dance.

18.

Plato died of old age with a copy of Aristophanes' *The Clouds* under his pillow. Plato knew what the unborn future would bring.¹¹ And the dance goes on ...

19.

Sophists are altogether too eager to prove their wisdom in the marketplace. The promise of vain glory shines brightly. Socrates, armed only with himself, went down into the marketplace daily. Through the questioning of general opinion, the shadows of sophist wisdom were disintegrated. For Socrates, as the gadfly, the open marketplace was perfect for awakening the masses, and unveiling the fraudulent activities of sophists. The publicity of the marketplace provided safety for his dangerous task.

The execution of Socrates painted the marketplace red - the safety of its open ground became contaminated with the fear of violent death. The polis sent a strong message: it is better to keep silent, to do your work, and to let *us* worry about it.

Plato worried about it, and ensured Socrates' immortality with the writing of his dialogues. Assuredly, Plato "thought of entering public life,"¹² but with the painful memory of Socrates' execution, and first hand witnessing of other impious deeds, he "was appalled and drew back from that reign of injustice."¹³ Plato knew that entering politics would tarnish his goal; the narcissistic power of politics would undoubtedly prove fatal. Equally as fatal was the market place. However, the king of philosophers saw another alternative: *education*.

20.

I can remember the first time I read Plato's *Republic*. It was disturbing to say the least. I pledged allegiance with Thrasymarchus who says, "you know very well that it is much easier to ask questions than to answer them."¹⁴ The rules were not fair - Socrates had the upper hand. I resented the fact that my own opinions were being tested: why can't that old badger just leave me alone? Upon completion of the book I placed it back on my bookshelf with a certain tone of miserable disgust.

A few days later, after I had calmed down considerably, I recalled several passages. What if the cave parable had some truth to it? What if I am only concerned with shadows? Then there was the

myth of Er. The last lines echoed my Christian upbringing: "it could save us if we believe it."¹⁵ Dreams of a Promised Land beyond the ills of human existence surfaced, and I began reading again.

Almost immediately I saw a marker towards the path leading into that Promised Land. I highlighted the line, "you must either be stronger than we are, or you must stay here."¹⁶ Plato was speaking to me - I read on, my eyes keenly fixed on the page. I bottled my strength, and pledged that I would not allow myself to be tempted away from the path.

Eventually I came to this: "I take it as a proof of this [that the words for diseases caused by idleness, such as flatulence and catarrh,¹⁷ did not exist at the time of Asclepius] that his sons at Troy didn't criticise either the woman who treated Eurypylus when he was wounded, or Patroclus who prescribed the treatment."¹⁸ The footnote suggested that I should see the *Iliad*. Nearly everything was different in Homer's version of events. It was a son of Asclepius who drank the remedy; Eurypylus was injured but healed by Patroclus himself, who applied a salve. The only similarity was that Eurypylus was wounded and Patroclus prescribed his treatment.

It didn't make any sense. I refused to believe that Plato was merely reciting the passage from memory - his work was too delicate to support the hypothesis of an undisciplined writing. No, Plato had considered carefully each and every word, and it was up to me to figure out what it meant.

Homer tells us that Eurypylus was wounded by Paris while saving Ajax. I recalled that Ajax choose the life of a lion at the end of the *Republic*,¹⁹ and that Paris was a shepherd, and Patroclus was a messenger of Achilles. I concluded that this was an example of the sheep (Eurypylus) being wounded by the shepherd (Paris) while saving the lion (Ajax) who is eventually saved by the messenger (Patroclus).

I applauded myself: "well done, you've cracked the code and gained access to the secret teachings of Plato." Plato was undermining the authority of the conventional values enforced by the shepherd. He understood the risk of harnessing the spirit of the lion, in an attempt to align one's soul properly, and vouched that the messenger would eventually save us with his miraculous ointments.

There still remained a question: who was this messenger? Immediately I turned to book X, and read the myth of Er once more. Some research told me that 'Er from Pamphylian' meant the 'Awakened

One from the Tribe of Everyman.²⁰ Er then was the divine messenger to which Plato was hinting at. Indeed he was the only one who "safely cross[ed] the stream of Forgetfulness."²¹ The others in the myth chose their lots in life and drank from the stream of Forgetfulness, all under the guise of Necessity. And we can see that what Glaucon takes as Necessity includes the acquiring of gold and ivory.²² Surely what most see as Necessity, the few will correctly perceive as choice. This is how we are saved and pass by the stream of Forgetfulness.

I became intoxicated with dreams of academic praise. I doubted that there had ever been another first year student to crack the code.

Sometimes, in retrospect, I make myself laugh. The point of the passage about the names for diseases caused by idleness was that Plato classifies these diseases as the by-products of modern luxury. The names did not exist at the time of Asclepius because the diseases did not exist. It is a disgrace that aristocrats fill up their entire lives managing their illnesses, which are caused by their own undisciplined way of life. There is also evidence that suggests Plato was reciting Homer from memory.²³ This business of sheep and shepherds, lions and messengers, is undisciplined speculation - likely to give any first year student a runny nose.

21.

*Closet Land*²⁴ is a story about a girl who is locked in the closet by her mother. While the mother is gone the clothes in the closet come to life. A cat with green wings, a flying cow, and a friendly rooster, who is really a scarf with the design of a rooster on it, keep the little girl company. When the mother is about to return the rooster crows and the girl's friends return to being clothes in the closet.

One can interpret this story politically: it is a secret message for an underground organisation against the powers that be. The friendly rooster, the cat with green wings, and the flying cow, are code-names for members of the organisation. The author's sympathy is obviously with the child who holds much hatred for the mother who symbolises government authority. *Closet Land* is a subversive attempt to undermine the present political conditions, and ought to be censured.

Or perhaps *Closet Land* is a children's story about a little girl's imagination.

22.

Plato's *Republic* stands as a complex multi-layered maze of words that can easily swallow you whole. Take his famous mathematical myth.²⁵ You could spend your life trying to crack the code, trying to find the meaning, trying desperately to uncover the hidden messages. Of course we are not children and must ask: "*why?*" Are your intentions noble, or do you merely seek the phantoms of social praise?

Consider this: perhaps Plato was testing the character of his students. The *Republic* affects students in a multitude of ways. Some immediately close the book up in frustration, and never return. Some take it seriously, and come away quite convinced that they understand the meaning of Justice. Others endlessly pursue the hidden meaning, the secret path to the Promised Land in hopes of entering the elite of academia. Some spend years studying it only to conclude that they have no idea what Plato was talking about.

Perhaps we have all missed the point.

23.

"Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it."²⁶

24.

Children are not very good liars, thieves, or murderers. They claim to know very little, and rarely lust after large amounts of material gain. Children are never afraid to dance and laugh aloud, since appearances matter little to them. They are remarkably subtle and incessantly curious. Indeed philosophers have much to learn from children.

25.

When we want to know about plumbing, we ask a plumber. When we want to know about electricity, we ask an electrician. When we want to know about mechanics, we ask a mechanic. Why then do we not ask children about the games we play?

"We must then make opportunities for the children to observe war ..."²⁷

26.

In grade three I was caught throwing a paper aeroplane in class. My teacher took me outside and asked why it was that I threw the

aeroplane. "I don't know," I said. He told me that I would have to stand outside the class room until I came up with a reason for why I threw the aeroplane knowing fully well that it was against classroom rules to throw paper aeroplanes. I remember thinking really hard, recounting the minutes right before I threw the aeroplane, but it was futile - there was no reason. I told my teacher this, and he frowned. My punishment was to rip the paper aeroplane into 100 pieces and number each one of them during recess. Ripping the aeroplane up did not make any sense to me then, and it makes even less sense now.

A similar experience occurred during the early 80's when I asked a teacher at school why we were so afraid of the Russians. I imagined that there must be a boy my own age living there who, like myself, knew the joys of playing hockey. My teacher looked down at me and said that we fear the Russians because they threaten our freedom. In Russia, he said, you cannot own land or vote for the best politician. I did not understand why those things were so important. My teacher frowned, and added that the Russians brainwash their citizens with propaganda. And worst of all, he said, the Russians have a nuclear bomb that could destroy everything.

"But don't we have a nuclear bomb too?" I questioned.

"Yes, and this keeps us safe."

Teachers, I remember thinking, are weird. What gives them a sense of security, only frightens me.

27.

One could argue that the babe in arms is unable to order his or her soul, or choose how to act, and is therefore incapable of leading the just life - but perhaps there is no reason, no *need* for the ordering of their souls. Perhaps the babe in arms is just fine the way he or she is; perhaps that babe in arms is already living in perfect harmony.

28.

This past summer I worked on my uncle's organic farm. My younger cousin asked me one day while we were fixing fences if I could ever kill another human being. He told me that he could not do it - no matter what the circumstances were. I reminded him of the second world war.

"Think about it - millions and millions of human beings were being massacred. Do you not think we have a responsibility to reply to the cries of humanity?" I asked.

"Well," he said regretfully, "I might be able to do it then."

"Me too."

"Doesn't make it right," he said.

"Well perhaps not," said I.

29.

"Socrates! how did you come off in the battle?" (A short time before we came away there had been a battle at Potidaea and the people at home had only just got the news.)

And I said in reply, "Exactly as you see me."

"The way we heard it here," he said, "the fighting was very heavy and many of our friends were killed."

"The report is pretty accurate," I said.

"Were you actually in the battle?" he said.

"Yes, I was there."²⁸

30.

Socrates: So one must never do wrong.

Crito: Certainly not.

Socrates: Nor must one, when wronged, inflict wrong in return, as the majority believe, since one must never do wrong.

Crito: That seems to be the case.²⁹

31.

"You did this in the belief that you would avoid giving account to your own life, but I maintain that quite the opposite will happen to you. There will be more people to test you ..."³⁰

32.

Strength does not come in degrees - there is no magical gauge that tells you how much strength you have got. You cannot store it in a bottle and drink it on occasion watching carefully to see how much is left. It is difficult to live the just life, but do not use your lack of strength to excuse yourself from trying. Whenever you need strength it will be there - it is a special feature built in to compensate for our many faults.

India Heisz taught me that. She's only 3 years old, a teacher, and a friend.

33.

"Well," he said, "you must either be stronger than we are, or you must stay here."³¹

34.

You are not born into the cave, you are there since childhood.³² As a prisoner you cannot turn your head to see others, since fetters dictate that your gaze remains straight ahead at the shadows.

It is possible that you have won first place in a contest to see who could see the shadows the clearest. Or perhaps you are part of a research institution and spend your time discussing with other great minds the latest shadow information in hopes of a great future where you finally understand the nature of shadows. Maybe you have been tapped on the shoulder by someone trying to tell you that the shadows are not real, only to call him a lunatic and your enemy. Or perhaps you have thought a great deal about this parable, trying desperately to break free, only to be cut from the struggle against the tightening chains of your slavery.

Or perhaps the shadows are only in your head.

35.

I have often wondered how many people would willingly choose this life. The prophetic voice of experience bluntly reminds us: "there will always be murderers, thieves, and liars amongst the people." The omniscient voice of innocence quietly whispers: "even the poorest life will dream dreams, see visions, and have amazing experiences." It is a cosmic blessing that none of us remember asking to be born in the first place.

Nonetheless we are born - and somewhere along the line a choice has to be made.

Notes

¹Robert Pirsig. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. New York: Bantam Books, 1974. Pirsig suggests that the quote is from Plato, however, the quote as such does not exist in the Plato corpus.

²*Good News Bible*. Today's English Version. Toronto: Canadian Bible Society, 1974, Genesis: 3:22.

³Antoine De Saint-Exupery *The Little Prince*. New York: Harcourt Brace

Jovanovich Inc, 1971, p. 68.

⁴Niccolo Machiavelli. *The Portable Machiavelli*. Ed., Trans, Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa New York: Penguin Books, 1979, p. 52.

Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. Ed. C.B.Macpherson. New York: Penguin Books, 1968, Part I, Ch. 11.

⁵Hobbes, p. 227.

⁶Aristotle. *Politics*. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998, p. 17.

⁷Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Trans. V.E.Watts. New York: Penguin Books, 1969, p. 36.

⁸Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Buffalo/New York: Prometheus Books, 1989, p.24.

⁹Plato. *Republic*. 487a.

¹⁰Ibid. 491b.

¹¹Ibid. 620ab. In the myth of Er, Orpheus (who sings like a nightingale) chooses the life of a swan; Thamyras chooses the life of a nightingale; a swan chooses the life of a man. This suggests that the lots in life will always be filled; the unborn future will be much of the same, both good and bad.

¹²Plato. *Letter VII*. 324b.

¹³Plato. *Republic*. 325a

¹⁴Ibid. 336c.

¹⁵Ibid. 621c.

¹⁶Ibid. 327c.

¹⁷That is, a runny nose.

¹⁸Ibid. 405e.

¹⁹Ibid. 620b.

²⁰See S. Halliwell's *Plato's Republic: Book X*.

²¹Plato. *Republic*. 620c.

²²Ibid. 373a.

²³See *Ion* 538c.

²⁴See *Closet Land*, a film by Radja Bharadajah, starring Madeleine Stowe and Alan Rickman.

²⁵Plato. *Republic*. 546a+.

²⁶*Good News Bible*, Luke 18:17.

²⁷Plato. *Republic*. 467c.

²⁸Plato. *Charmides*. 153b+

²⁹Plato *Crito*. 49b.

³⁰Plato. *Apology*. 39d.

³¹Plato. *Republic*. 327c.

³²Ibid. 514a.

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*Poet's Paradox**

The need for naming
results only in the creation of mythology,
a parsing of things organic.
Sins not only of omission, for
no poet
can wholly capture the spirit of their subject,
but of commission as well:
pen to paper an act of faith
proved false in each instance of its completion.

How to balance this with the compulsive
expressive impulse,
the suffocation which arises
out of a dearth of words:
an oppression of emptiness
grown palpable.

Poetry is thus the
moulding of pauses, an
ability to evoke
obliquely;

at once an embodiment and a shade of the unspeakable.

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How Communities Make Possible All Human Goods: A Defence of National Partiality

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COMMON SENSE tells us that it is good to be a patriot. Loyalty to our conationals is usually regarded as morally unproblematic because people belonging to the same nation feel that they owe it to one another. Special relationships like those between conationals are often thought to generate special duties which take precedence over our general moral duties to all people. However, from the standpoint of universalist moral theories (both deontological and utilitarian), favouring our conationals over people from other nations appears to be both unfair and unjustified. If all people and their interests are equally valuable, then the fact that someone belongs to your nation should not be a consideration in decisions about the fair distribution of burdens and benefits. Some critics of national partiality argue that when we confer benefits upon the people with whom we have special relationships, we do so *at the expense* of everyone else who we may have otherwise benefited. If the selection of our conationals for receipt of benefits is wholly arbitrary, as many universalists would argue, then it seems that both the existence of these special duties and the moral

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correctness of carrying them out are called into question.

Do we genuinely have special duties to our conationals? Are we ever justified in being partial to them? In this paper, I will present and evaluate the views of Samuel Scheffler, Thomas Hurka and Stephen Nathanson with regard to these questions. In my argument for the justification of limited national partiality, I will make use of those aspects of their views which shed light on the following three issues: (a) the nature of our relation to our conationals, (b) the value of that relation, and (c) whether it can justify partiality with respect to them.

I will argue that a community is a particular relation between people, and so to sustain a community is to sustain that relation. We want to sustain communities because they are a constitutive part of human lives, and so make possible the pursuit of other human goods. People are justified in giving priority to sustaining their own community and its members because it enables them to pursue the good of helping others.

In his article "Relationships and Responsibilities," Samuel Scheffler investigates how we come to have responsibilities to some people that we do not have to others. He notes that two kinds of considerations are typically invoked to explain this phenomenon: (1) a specific interaction between people, like a promise or agreement, or (2) a relationship with a particular person, like a familial relation or membership in a common nation. He comments that "we would be hard pressed to find any type of human relationship to which people have attached value or significance but which has never been seen as generating... responsibilities" (Scheffler, 190). Scheffler notes that one of the key moral problems with special relationships is that they seem to confer unfair advantages on their bearers.

He asserts that if someone has just become my friend, three changes in my responsibilities have taken place: (1) I now have duties to that person which I did not have before, (2) my duties to her may cause me not to do things for strangers that I otherwise would have done and (3) my duties to her now take priority over those I have to others simply as human beings. This means that I am required to help her if I cannot help both her and a stranger. The new relationship also confers advantages on me. I am now permitted to do things which allow the friendship to flourish in place of things which help others, and I benefit from the duties she now has towards me.

The universalist, or "distributive" objection to the duties which

arise out of special relationships is the following: Why “should our friendship give rise to a distribution of responsibilities that is favourable to us and unfavourable to other people?” (Scheffler 193). It seems that friends benefit both from participating in their rewarding relationship and from the special obligations which it creates, while their relationship renders the claims of others weaker. This objection states that whenever providing advantages works to the detriment of others it is unjustifiable. If the benefits of a relationship are not placed within a context of equal distribution of benefits and burdens then this kind of partiality is a vicious kind of prejudice (Scheffler 194).

In response, Scheffler provides a “nonreductionist” account of special responsibilities (195). This means that the source of our responsibilities in special relationships cannot be reduced to some interaction between the parties involved. A nonreductionist of this type believes that “our perception of things is basically correct; the source of such responsibilities often does lie in the relationships themselves” (195). He argues that if I have a special relationship to which I attach non-instrumental value, then I see that person as entitled to make more claims on me than people in general. He asserts that *what it means* to value a relationship non-instrumentally is to “see a person as a source of special claims in virtue of the relationship between us” (196). That person’s interests and needs provide me with decisive reasons for action which I would not have had if we were not in such a relationship. These are considerations upon which I must act, but they may be overridden by other considerations, including universal moral duties.

Scheffler thinks that it is impossible to see a relationship as non-instrumentally valuable without seeing it as generating special responsibilities. However, if someone disagrees that a given relationship has value or significance, then she probably will not see it as source of special responsibilities. He suggests that special relationships give rise to special responsibilities when “they are relationships that one has reason to value” (197). Here, “reason” should be understood to mean “net reason.” This means that if I have reason to value a relationship but more reason not to, then it does not generate any responsibilities.

His nonreductionist view does not specify the strength or content of these responsibilities, and so admits that they may be outweighed. He notes that the above condition is sufficient but not

necessary for the presence of responsibilities, so that interactions and agreements may also generate special duties. It is an attractive feature of his view that it accounts for instances when people do not think they have special responsibilities, but they actually do. Since the responsibilities come from the *reason* for them to value the relationship and not from the fact that they *actually* value it, a person can have a responsibility which she denies (Scheffler, 199).

Scheffler recognises that his account is “hostage” to a further account of reasons, which must not be too closely tied to a person’s existing desires and motivations (200). If reasons for action are entirely constituted by the desires and motivations people actually have, rather than those that they should have, then the distinction mentioned above collapses. Scheffler’s nonreductionism itself does not include an account of reasons.

Since we are social creatures with values, and what it *means* to value a relation non-instrumentally is to see it as a source of additional claims, then “insofar as we have good reasons to value our interpersonal relations,” then we have good reasons to see ourselves as having special responsibilities (Scheffler, 200-201). Scheffler notes that if the distributive objection is not seen as a wholesale rejection of special relationships, but rather as stipulating that the benefits which arise out of them should be part of a larger scheme in which benefits and burdens are distributed equally, then nonreductionists could happily agree with them. He recognises that special relationships should be subject to some constraints, like when they may take priority and what constitutes a valuable relationship. For instance, a relationship which goes against important moral principles, like a racist organisation, would not be eligible to generate special responsibilities.

Scheffler maintains that in order for that account of morality to be satisfactory it must integrate the special responsibilities which arise out of relationships into a larger moral framework. However, he also notes that there is a tension between the partiality underlying special responsibilities and the universalist values which underlie the distributive objection. He admits that nothing in his position “guarantees that we will be able simultaneously to accommodate both features to our satisfaction” (208). It remains an open question exactly to what extent diverse moral values can be consistently combined into one moral scheme.

Scheffler’s account of how special relationships give rise to

special responsibilities accurately reflects our intuitions. It is definitely the case that being in a special relationship gives us reasons to regard the other person's interests and needs as our own. His account of why some relationships generate responsibilities and others do not also has much to recommend it. Most importantly, it does not make these responsibilities dependent upon people's inclinations. If they were, a mother who did not value her relation to her children would not have any responsibilities to them. Also, it excludes bad partialities like racism.

In other respects, I find Scheffler's view perplexing. He admits that his view is dependent on an account of reasons, but does not think that this is particularly problematic. He states that at least this places the controversy in the right place, namely, around what the circumstances are which generate special responsibilities. However, if his account is dependent upon an account of *reasons to value* a relationship, then we need to know what counts as ultimately valuable. In one sense, then, his account does not help us determine the answer to the question we are asking. If he does not provide an account of what is valuable in a relationship then we cannot determine (1) when these special responsibilities pertain and so (2) when carrying them out is morally acceptable. We also do not know when they should be overridden. Providing these answers is exactly what a defender of special obligations needs to do, in order to show why such relationships are not utterly unfair and why the duties we ascribe to them are legitimate.

Further, Scheffler's views that (a) special responsibilities should be set in a fair context and that (b) there is a tension between partiality and universalism which may not be possible to eliminate, contradict one another. The former implies that we can integrate these two approaches, while the latter doubts it. In the end, to say that there is a tension between partiality and universalism is unhelpful. It is exactly this contradiction within morality that is troubling.

By contrast, Thomas Hurka provides a strong explanation of why national partiality is justified. He assumes that familial partiality is self-evidently justified, and tries to determine if a similar relation is present among conationals. He defends a view he calls "universalist" nationalism, which states that "*all* people ought to be partial to their own nation and conationals" (139). He wants to know if nationalism can be justified intrinsically, and so he does not consider instrumental

justifications, which try to show that being partial to conationals has good effects impartially considered.

Hurka notes that universalist nationalism says partiality toward one's nation is appropriate for all humans in all cultures. It is also agent-relative, in that it says what different people should be partial to is different (Hurka 144). He claims that "full-blooded nationalism" can be described as follows: Nationalists are partial to both (1) their nation or the interests of the individuals in it and (2) the impersonal goods of their particular culture. He explains that "the survival of a culture is an impersonal good in the sense that it is not reducible to the goods of individual persons, or to the goods located in individual person's lives" (144). Valuing one's culture as an impersonal good is demonstrated to be part of nationalism by the fact that people care whether or not their culture will survive three generations from now, even if they admit that people may lead equally happy lives in a different culture (Hurka, 145).

Hurka contends that "people interacting in certain ways [a culture] can have a value that is separate from the value present in individual people's lives" (145). He also thinks that caring about the flourishing of a culture as an impersonal good *entails* a kind of partiality, in that people do not care about the survival of all cultures equally. If this were the case, then for instance, Quebeckers would admit that their culture could be allowed to disappear if it would save two others. They certainly would not concede this. He maintains that valuing the flourishing of your culture must be restricted by the human rights of people in other cultures, i.e. it is not acceptable to harm others in order to help your culture flourish better (146-147).

He claims that two different justifications are needed for the two components of nationalism. If caring about impersonal goods entails partiality, then the question becomes whether we should care about impersonal goods at all, or only about the goods of individuals. In terms of partiality towards conationals, he thinks a justification needs to establish that the kind of relation which holds in a family also holds in a nation. He sets about demonstrating that in at least one respect, nations are like families, and so partiality to one's conationals is sometimes justified (149).

Of course, Hurka admits that nations are not like families in the degree of interaction which they involve. People do not even know everyone in their nation, never mind having intimate daily interactions

with them. However, he demonstrates their important similarity with an analogy. He loves his wife both for certain qualities she has, and as an individual. This means he loves her for morally relevant qualities like her trustworthiness, and also for “certain historical qualities only she possesses” (Hurka, 150). These historical qualities derive from her participation in their shared history of good times, suffering, and of realising goals together. Her historical qualities explain why he loves *her* more than other people, but if her general qualities were to alter so much that she became a completely bad person, then he would not feel that he had special obligations to her any longer.

Hurka maintains that this is the relation conationals have to one another. They believe that their culture and the activities which define it are good, and they also participate in a shared history with one another. They are thus attached both to their nation and to their conationals by shared historical experiences of being shaped by, participating in, and sustaining their culture (151). This shared history justifies partiality toward one’s conationals provided that the general qualities of one’s culture are good.

He stresses that the culture’s general qualities must be good in order to justify partiality, because it is obvious that a shared history of evil-doing, such as in Nazi Germany, does not justify any partiality. Rather, it seems to indicate that those people should refrain from associating with one another. This also explains why partiality is not acceptable for racists, but it is for minority groups which have been discriminated against on the basis of race. A shared history of suffering and resistance is a legitimate basis for partiality, whereas a history of doing the discriminating is not, since the general qualities of the former group are good and of the latter are not. He claims that a shared history of doing good or suffering evil is the basis for strong duties of partiality.

Finally, Hurka notes that if the relation of a shared history of doing good holds between people, then two things determine the degree of partiality which is appropriate between them. The first is the closeness of their relations, which does not indicate that a great deal of partiality is called for between conationals. The second is the amount of good that is produced by their interactions. The more good their interactions produce, the stronger duties of partiality they have to one another. Here, Hurka claims that nations are roughly equivalent to families, because the per capita benefit derived from the rule of law and

social programs is approximately equal to the support one receives in a family situation. Therefore, people are justified in being partial to their conationals to a lesser extent than to their families, because the national relation produces about an equal amount of good but lacks the closeness of the familial relation (Hurka, 153-154).

Although I think Hurka's justification of national partiality has some difficulties, I also think it provides some of the content which is missing in Scheffler's explanation of special responsibilities. In particular, I think Hurka's breakdown of our familial relations and how this compares to our relation with conationals is instructive. We do value our conationals because we believe our nation has generally good qualities, and because we share a history of cultural development and of doing good with them. This analysis of partial attachment demonstrates both why we are motivated to value these relations and why they are valuable in themselves. Perhaps these reasons for valuing our national relation would qualify as the kind which generate special responsibilities on Scheffler's account. Hurka's description of partial relations is the strongest element of his analysis.

His method of justification, however, is very questionable, and so I cannot accept it as proof for the moral correctness of nationalist partiality. He claims that "the arena in which partiality seems to be the most justified is the family" (149). Certainly, this *seems* to be the case. However, there is still a very real conflict between the partiality we think is justified in the family and the universal justifications we commonly regard as establishing a practice's moral correctness. I agree with him about partiality in the family, but he should not model his "justification" on a practice of partiality that is itself unjustified. Simply because we regard it as acceptable does not mean that we ought to do so.

Hurka originally suggests that an attachment to someone based on shared history somehow "demands" partiality toward that person when her general qualities are good. Although shared history may *explain why* we would feel especially attached to our families and conationals, I do not think it creates an obligation of partiality. However, he must suspect that he needs something stronger than historical attachment to make this account work, because later on he argues that the degree of justifiable partiality is determined by how much good the interactions of the people in this relation achieve. This looks a lot like a separate justification for national partiality, since it is

now unclear why a historical relation would have to exist at all. Presumably a relationship with someone with whom I have no shared history can produce good consequences, and my partiality to this person would be justified by those consequences. Unfortunately, this is precisely the kind of instrumental justification which he rejected at the outset.

Stephen Nathanson takes yet another approach to the problem. He wants to defend nationalism against the criticism of global humanists, or those who support the ideal of a unified world “in which human beings transcend national differences and organise themselves on the basis of their shared humanity” (Nathanson, 176). He argues that some forms of nationalism can be justified by appealing to the same values which the global humanists cherish. This means that they would have to concede that a “moderate” nationalism is morally legitimate. He gives the following working definition of a nation: “any sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a nation,” (177). Although he realises some scholars would find this problematic, he thinks it serves well enough for the purposes of discussion.

Nathanson claims that nationalists are people who identify with their nation and desire its flourishing (178). He notes that patriotism and nationalism are similar in that they both inspire partiality or a special concern for the well-being of one’s own nation. He begins by stating the standard “Flourishing Argument.” This is the view that human beings need to belong to or identify with some group beyond their family in order to flourish, or else their flourishing is promoted when they do (178). The global humanists respond to this argument by asking “If people have to identify with some large group in order to flourish, why not identify with all humanity and avoid the many problems to which national identifications give rise?” (Nathanson, 179).

Nathanson responds with the following argument for “defensive” nationalism. He claims that a national group can often justify its claims to territory, statehood and partiality to its members because “the alternative for members of that group is exposure to the risk of destruction by other groups” (179). He asserts that “defensive” nationalism can also explain why people have more reason to identify with their national group than with all of humanity. Some people have no choice but to identify with their group, because they are identified as

a member by hostile others who see their membership as a reason to persecute them. If I am persecuted for such group membership, then this will strengthen my identification with that group because we now share the experience of persecution. In addition, when a hostile group threatens my flourishing or survival, my ability to flourish or survive may well come to depend on how well members of my group can band together to protect us and our interests. "This in turn provides me with powerful, personal incentives to act on behalf of this group and to be more concerned about its well-being than I am about other groups" (Nathanson, 180).

Nathanson claims that the above argument refutes the global humanist objection that national identification is arbitrary (180). However, he does recognise that there are other ways to develop a national identity which are not related to persecution by hostile others. Since he regards defensive nationalism as a kind of negative Flourishing Argument, he combines it with the positive one put forward earlier. His improved version of the Flourishing Argument goes like this: (1) humans need to identify with or belong to a group in order to flourish, (2) individuals can only flourish if the nation flourishes, (3) we think it is good for human beings to flourish, (4) therefore, it is desirable for national groups to flourish, and (5) if a national group requires certain institutional arrangements to flourish, then it is desirable that they should have them (181-182).

Next, he responds to the objection that many people do not identify with a national group and do not have any trouble flourishing, so national communities are clearly not necessary for flourishing. Nathanson notes that some activities do require a community of "like-valued" individuals, and that these activities constitute meaningful parts of many lives. If enough people feel this way, and view their national group as providing the right kind of community for these activities, then a few "loners" do not "upset the argument" (Nathanson, 182). "If large numbers of people can only flourish under certain circumstances and if their flourishing is a good, then the existence of those circumstances is a good" (Nathanson, 182).

Further, he notes that the belief that a national identity is necessary for flourishing is self-fulfilling. If one believes that one needs a national identity in order to have a happy life, one is likely to feel empty or despondent if one does not. This addresses the objection that people are simply mistaken in their belief that they need a national

group to flourish. It is clear that many people think that their personal flourishing is intimately related to the flourishing and health of their community. If we do not want to be paternalistic and suggest that *we* know what will make people flourish while *they* do not, we must respect this view. Part of being committed to respecting people is taking their views about their own good seriously (Nathanson, 183).

Nathanson claims that the above arguments prove that global humanism is not an adequate moral ideal, since some forms of nationalism are justified. Of course, he rejects extreme forms of nationalism that claim it is acceptable for people to harm people from other nations in order to promote the flourishing of their own nation. Instead, he argues in favour of “moderate” nationalism. In fact, he argues that once global humanism and nationalism are each adjusted to recognise the legitimate claims of the other, they end up being the same view.

Moderate nationalists are ones who consider the well-being of their own nation to be very important but also recognise constraints on the means by which they can promote its flourishing. They realise that morality gives us some duties toward all people, and that people outside of their nation have worth and rights too. They are committed to negative duties not to harm or initiate aggression against other nations, but recognise the right of self-defence. They also recognise a duty to help other nations when “they are in extreme distress and their own nation is well-off” (Nathanson, 184). Thus, he claims that the only legitimate form of nationalism acknowledges some universal principles, and that global humanists must admit that this form of nationalism is legitimate.

In general, Nathanson’s view is quite persuasive. However, it suffers from the central difficulty of all “compromise” views. It is very difficult to specify when a nation is well-off enough to be required to help other nations, and what counts as extreme distress. I do not think that there can be a strict definition of these things, which means that nations will often end up defining them according to what suits their partial interests. Many nationalists would argue that their nation can never be well-off enough, because any excess resources they may have should be saved for a rainy day.

It also strikes me that Nathanson’s moderate nationalism would have to treat universal moral duties as less important than those generated by national membership in some circumstances. If other

nations were engaging in human rights abuses in wartime and the only way he could save his own nation from destruction was to perpetrate the same abuses in self-defence, could Nathanson reasonably defend this? I think he could, since he regards self-defence as a solid justification for the formation and continued existence of national states. However, I think that a genuinely integrated view of partial and impartial duties would have to reject this suggestion. Human rights abuses would have to serve as the bottom limit on partiality, and we may be required to sacrifice ourselves in order not to perpetrate them. I am not sure Nathanson would support these conclusions, and so his view justifies more national partiality than is acceptable.

Having evaluated these three diverse views on the nature and justification of our partial national attachments, I will present an argument in favour of limited national partiality. However, I will first address two issues which need to be resolved before such a justification can be put forward. The first issue is whether universalist nationalism is already justified, because it affords the same opportunity for partiality to members of all nations. Presumably, the reason this view is often accepted is that it is seen as fair to everyone. The assumption here is that as long as everyone is equally free to be partial to their own nation then this partiality is morally legitimate. Despite the obvious fairness of this view, I do not consider it a moral viewpoint at all.

This becomes clear when we apply this model at the level of the individual. An individual might say the following: "I am going to be partial to myself and my own interests, but it is absolutely fine with me that everyone else does the same." Most people would agree that this attitude is not moral. Rather, it seems to be a variety of egoism. It is exactly this kind of partiality that the universalists wish to claim is unjustified, and I think that they are right. There are clearly times when my interests simply do not take precedence over those of others, such as when a small harm to me would bring a large benefit to someone else. From a universalist perspective, fairness dictates that I should sometimes endure harm and that I should not always look out only for myself. The problem with equal opportunity partiality is that it allows people to treat their own interests as more valuable than everyone else's. This seems to undermine morality altogether, and so is unjustifiable in principle.

I think the above argument illustrates that if national partiality is to be justified, it will not be achieved by emphasising that each

person is equally free to be partial to her own nation. A variation of this view is defended by voluntarists who maintain that negative duties are all that is required of nations. It is unclear to me why a nation, which is capable of acting as a moral agent, should be exempt from the duties that we normally expect of individuals.

The second issue concerns the source of our partial obligations to conationals. I, unlike Scheffler, think it is necessary to establish that contractarian and mutual-benefit views cannot account for the kind of partial obligations which we feel we have to our conationals, before I attempt to give a justification based upon my special relationship to them. The most common version of the contractarian view says that my obligation to be partial to my conationals originates in an agreement we have to form a community or nation-state. This means that we have effectively promised to look after one another and so we have to give this promise priority over performing any supererogatory acts of charity to others. The main problem with this view is that state membership is largely non-voluntary. We do not, in fact, have such an agreement with our conationals. This is demonstrated by the fact that we cannot opt out of our special responsibilities to them.

Alternatively, there is the view that we are indebted to our conationals because we receive benefits from belonging to a nation, and that this indebtedness is the basis of our obligations to them. It does not matter whether we agreed to receive such benefits, only that we did. This view is clearly false. I do not think that everyone who benefits me belongs to my nation, and I do not only have obligations to those conationals who “do their share.” I owe obligations to all my conationals, including those who are unable or unwilling to contribute to the common good. Robert Goodin points this out in his article “What is So Special about My Fellow Countrymen?” and I think it conclusively eliminates the mutual-benefit model as a plausible account of the foundation of our obligations to conationals (Goodin, 676-677).

Thus, the main problem with these accounts is that they ignore the relatively permanent, non-voluntary nature of membership in a national group. This permanence and non-voluntariness is similar to the relation we have to our families, in that we simply “stand in relation” to these people from birth. You cannot refuse your relation or obligations to your conationals in this sense. Rather, you can only fail to recognise and honour them. Given this, I think a justification based on the value of the relation between conationals, like Scheffler’s, is the best option.

What is this relation? I agree with Hurka that a shared history and culture are key aspects of the relationship between conationals. Although I do not think that this history generates an obligation of partiality, it does explain why the well-being of my conationals would be more important to me than that of complete strangers. I share a common life and values with these people. They are in a way, my kind of people, and I value both their good qualities and their historically-specific qualities. I would add the following to Hurka's account: conationals' sense of a collective future and their ability to take collective action. There is a special relation between people who have direct and frequent impact on one another's future.

Having justified my approach and having tried to establish what the relation between conationals consists in, I will now present my own answer to these two key questions: (1) Why is my relation to them valuable? and (2) Can this value justify being partial to them?

(1) As I said earlier, I find Scheffler's view of how relationships give rise to special obligations convincing, so I will use it as my model here. This means that our relation to our conationals can only generate special responsibilities if we have good reason to value it. Do we?

I think so. In fact, I think our relation to our conationals, in that it establishes our place in a community, is a necessary precondition for procuring all other human goods. Hurka seems to be on the right track when he states that "the survival of a culture is an impersonal good in the sense that it is not reducible to the goods of individual persons" (144). However, I do not think that a historical/cultural community, (a nation loosely defined) is a good in itself so much as it is a constitutive part of human lives. The fact that you belong to a group of people who interact in certain ways can be described as a necessary requirement for living a human life. Only in this context can people acquire language, skills, values, and make choices about what goods to pursue. Living without such a community would be like living in a vacuum, and even if it is conceivable, it would not be recognisable as a human life.

I am not saying that a community is a means to a good human life. Indeed, I do not think that it can be. I cannot use my community for my own ends and then when it has exhausted all its value for my objectives, simply discard it. If I attempted to do so, I would simply have to join another community, which demonstrates that having a

community is the required context for having and pursuing any objectives at all. My point is not that a particular community cannot be used as a means in this manner, but that communities in general cannot be so used. Being part of a community *makes possible* my pursuit of other human goods. It does this in many ways, not the least important of which is pointed out by Nathanson. My historical/cultural community both protects me from harm and gives me positive opportunities to grow.

Someone might well suggest that the family unit could serve as the context for my having a human life. However, upon closer inspection, this view is not very reasonable. My family can only teach me the language, values and customs I need to live a human life if it is embedded in a larger community which sustains these things. A single family living in a vacuum is no more possible than a single person living in one. Presumably, even hermits do not raise themselves and so a historical/cultural community is still a necessary condition for their lives being what they are.

My argument is distinct from the Flourishing Argument because I am not saying that people need a human community to flourish, but rather that being in a community is a constitutive part of human life. The fact that we cannot imagine what a life without a community would be like is evidence enough that this is the case. The idea of flourishing presupposes that I could exist without such a community, and that my existence, though not very healthy, would resemble that of an ordinary human being. I am not sure that these assumptions are correct.

A global humanist of the sort described by Nathanson might ask why the community which is the necessary precondition for the pursuit of human goods is not the whole human community. One reason is that a community is a group of people who have some relationship to one another. A relationship is more concrete than sharing the same biology or world with someone. Indeed, we have seen that my relation to others in my community is partly constituted by our shared history, and that of our ancestors. Also, it is just false that humanity as a whole provides the conditions for making my life a human life, such as sustaining a language, values, a political structure, and most obviously, protecting me from other groups who might wish to harm me. People spread out all over the world are too far away from each other to provide this kind of context.

Communities, nations and states can be seen as distinct entities. It is possible to have many communities in a nation and several nations in a state. Although the line dividing who is and who is not included in my community may not be sharp, that does not mean it cannot be drawn. Factors like physical location, values, history, language and common government all affect who I consider to be part of my community, in the sense of who makes an ongoing contribution to and impact on the nature and quality of my life. My community is made up of people who share some lasting interests with me and recognise these interests as constituting some kind of common life. Whether this community is identical to, or overlaps with, a nation-state, is a topic for another paper.

Taking a historical/cultural community as a reasonably good working description of a nation (but not a state), it becomes clear that we should value such communities because they are a constitutive part of human lives, making possible the pursuit and achievement of all other human goods. It seems that we have no other rational option if we wish to value anything at all.

(2) Why are people justified in sustaining their own community first, or giving it priority, if all people require one in order to pursue other human goods? Since the community is what makes possible these pursuits, then by definition, we cannot try to sustain other communities if ours is not already reasonably well-sustained. It is definitely good to help people in other communities and we should do it, but we are justified in sustaining our own first. It is what enables us to help other communities, and indeed, what provides us with the values which suggest that we should. I think my account shows that we are justified in allocating resources to sustaining our own historical/cultural community before we endeavour to help people in other ones. Since the most basic way to sustain a historical/cultural community is to sustain its members, then it follows that we can give our conationals priority over strangers to a limited extent.

What are these limits? It seems to make sense that a community can allocate its resources partially to ensure that it is functioning well, that is reasonably economically successful, and that its members are not generally at risk of imminent disaster. Here again, we have the difficult task of determining when a community is securely self-sustaining, and so should look past its own interests and begin to contribute to the good of strangers. I do not intend to address this issue

here, but only to stress that my justification of limited national partiality depends on the notion that communities make possible the pursuit of *human* goods, not merely the good of their own members. I think it is useful to remember that the health of a community is the condition for promoting the good of all, equally valuable people, and not an end in itself.

If the goal is the development of human goods generally, why justify national partiality at all? Certainly there is no lack of nationalist sentiments world-wide, and many evils have been perpetrated in their name. I think my argument needs to be made because the reasons we value our communities at least partly determine how we regard those outside of it. For instance, if we think national partiality is justified because our nation is better than others, then we will feel free to exploit others for the sake of our nation. If we think national partiality is justified because everyone is equally entitled to be partial to their own nation, then we will not feel particularly obliged to help strangers. By contrast, if we think national partiality is justified *only* because it is the condition for the pursuit of human goods generally, (as I would like to suggest), then we can understand ourselves as having moral obligations to strangers without denying that our special relationships should have central importance in our lives. This viewpoint is preferable to the impossible suggestion that we should care about every human being equally.

Thus, I have tried to establish (a) the nature of our relation to our conationals, (b) that it is *this* relation which is the source of special responsibilities to them, (c) why this relation is valuable, and (d) how this value justifies a limited amount of nationalist partiality. I think recognising that historical/cultural communities, or nations, are defined by a particular kind of relation between people, and that they are constitutive of human lives, helps us understand why we feel so strongly that we can be partial to the people in them. Such communities are what enable us to pursue all human goods, including the good of helping strangers.

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Bodhisattvas Among Us

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IN THE MAHAYANA Buddhist tradition the bodhisattva, a type of Buddhist saint, embodies compassion and love because she places the salvation of other sentient beings ahead of her own attainment of Nirvana. She¹ is a Buddha to be who chooses to remain in the cycle of birth, death and rebirth so that she may help others to achieve enlightenment. For this benevolence, she is so admired that her status in Buddhism, in particular Mahayana Buddhism, occasionally surpasses that of the Buddha. The goal of attaining Buddhahood is thus replaced with the journey of the Bodhisattva. This is in keeping with the strong Mahayanist belief that all sentient beings are ultimately capable of enlightenment and can attain enlightenment through Nirvana. To show that Mahayana Buddhism is the religion of the bodhisattva I shall begin by examining the meaning and significance of the bodhisattva in a Buddhist spiritual hierarchy, then examine the ten stages of bodhisattvahood, the relevance of the bodhisattva to the Mahayanist concept of universal enlightenment and the practical significance of this conclusion. To do this I shall use *The Lotus Sutra*, the central text of the Mahayana sect, and the work of some contemporary Buddhist practitioners and scholars such as D.T. Suzuki.

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Bodhi and the Bodhisattva

Bodhisattva is a rich, composite word, made up of the Sanskrit words *bodhi* and *sattva*. *Bodhi* comes from the root word *budh*, which means, “to wake”, but is often understood and translated as “intelligence” or “knowledge”. *Sattva* can be translated literally as “state of being”. The English equivalent to *sattva* would be closer to “creature”, “existence”, or “that which is.” Thus, *bodhisattva* means “a being of intelligence” or “a being whose essence is intelligence.”²

The term *bodhi* is also significant in Mahayanist thought. The Mahayanists see Bodhi as being “an expression of the Dharmakaya in the human consciousness” (Suzuki 295). Bodhi and Dharmakaya are viewed as nothing but different aspects of a single reality that has been refracted “through the several defective lenses of a finite intellect” (295). Bodhi is essentially an epistemological term that takes on a religious tone when combined with *citta*, which is often translated as heart. *Bodhicitta*³ or “intelligence heart” is often used in lieu of bodhi in Mahayanist texts when the religious significance is to be emphasised over the intellectual one; though bodhi and bodhicitta essentially refer to the same thing.

What constitutes the essence of the bodhicitta is the same thing that makes up the Dharmakaya; however, the bodhicitta is a finite, fragmented and imperfect realisation of the Dharmakaya in all sentient beings. The bodhicitta is the copy and the Dharmakaya is the original, but one is just as real as the other is. However, one must not make the error of thinking of the two in a dualistic manner. The famous analogy of the moon is used to explain how this is possible.

When the moon shines with her silvery light in the clear, cloudless skies, she is reflected in every drop and in every mass of water on the earth. The crystal dew on the quivering leaves reflect her like so many pearls hung on the branches. Every little water-pool, probably formed temporarily by heavy showers in the daytime, reflects her like so many stars descended on earth. Perhaps some of the pools are muddy and others even filthy, but the moonlight does not refuse to reflect her immaculate image in them. The image is just as perfect there as in a clear, undisturbed, transparent lake... Wherever there is the least trace of water, there is seen a heavenly image of the goddess of night. (304)

Thus, if one uses the above analogy to understand the relationship between the Dharmakaya, which transcends all, and the bodhicitta, which is its reflection, then one can also see that Bodhicitta is present in the hearts of all sentient beings. What distinguishes the average person from a bodhisattva or a Buddha is the degree to which the bodhicitta is awakened or realised. For example, the bodhicitta of the Buddha is fully realised while in ordinary mortals it is dormant and crippled. It is awakened however, under any and all of the following circumstances: The first way is by thinking of the Buddhas, with their great spiritual power and infinite wisdom. If one realises that the Buddhas are the noblest embodiment of humankind and that they attain their omniscience through the sacrifice of possessions, body and even life, then being a creature of intelligence, one may realise that she or he too can attain such powers and cross "the great ocean of birth and death and of passions and sins" (304), by following their example.

The second way is to reflect on one's material existence in this realm of Samsara, and see its faults. One's physical body is nothing but a combination of the five skandhas and the four elements, and is the cause of evil actions. "This our bodily existence, harbouring within itself anger, avarice, and infatuation and other innumerable evil passions, consumes a good heart" (305). It is also the cause of one's ignorance, creates bad karma and keeps one in the cycle of birth-death-rebirth. Seeing that the human body must be cast aside like an undesired possession brings one closer to more fully realising and awakening the bodhicitta within one's self.

The third way is to observe and reflect upon the miserable state in which beings live: all creatures exist in a state of ignorance. They are consumed by their passions and are under the control of their infatuations. They do not understand or do not believe in the law of karma, and so they continue to accumulate bad karma, which causes them pain and suffering and entrenches them in the cycle of birth-death-rebirth. These sentient beings live in constant fear of old age and death, and are tortured by the pains of grief and anxiety because they do not understand the true nature of the universe. Realising that this is the way that most humans live invokes sympathy and pity, thus awakening the bodhicitta.

The fourth way of awakening the bodhicitta is by aspiring after the virtues that are acquired in the highest enlightenment by the Thus-Come-One. These include great moral discipline, tranquillity,

intelligence, emancipation, great compassion, and omniscience. In addition, they have the ten powers, four types of fearlessness, and the three contemplations. Through their discipline, the Tathagatas have acquired this noble, dignified manner and appearance that inspires all “with the thought that dispels pain and woe” (306)

Since the bodhicitta is the manifestation of the Dharmakaya in the limited conscious mind of all sentient beings, “it constantly longs for a unification with its archetype, in spite of the curse of ignorance heavily weighing upon it.” (306-7) When this unification is not effected, the bodhicitta expresses dissatisfaction through pessimism, suicide, asceticism, or some other eccentric practice. However, if the sentient being seeks to reunify the Dharmakaya within herself with the Dharmakaya that transcends, then the more intense the initial dissatisfaction, the more energetic the spiritual activity of the Bodhisattva will ultimately be (307).

Having awakened the bodhicitta from its dormant state, the bodhisattva then proceeds to make promises, enumerate her aspirations and wishes, and determine the ultimate goals that will follow her from one life to another. These *pranidhanas*, commonly translated as ‘vows’, are “an inflexible determination to carry out one’s will even through an infinite number rebirths” (307) Each Bodhisattva is considered to have her own set of vows that direct her share of the work of universal salvation, and these vows follow her from one life to another. There are believed to be ten general vows that the Bodhisattvas make: these spring naturally from the bodhicitta, which has been awakened within them (308).

All sentient beings possess the bodhicitta, therefore all sentient beings are potential bodhisattvas because the bodhicitta can never be nullified, even in the most profane of hearts. The bodhicitta is beyond the realm of samsara, and therefore is not subject to any defilement in this world. The *Ichchantika*, for example, are individuals who are completely overwhelmed by the passions of this life. From a spiritual perspective, they are no more than animated corpses. But even within such a horrible environment, the bodhicitta cannot be harmed, although it may lie dormant. It may take innumerable rebirths, but eventually it will seek out reunification with the Dharmakaya.

The Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood

While the Dharmakaya assumes a relative existence in a sentient being, and is partially obscured by ignorance, there appear to be various stages of actualisation or perfection that one must go through in order to fully become one with the Dharmakaya. The many lives of the bodhisattva are aimed at unfolding, realising, and identifying herself with the transcendent Dharmakaya. The first step in attaining such a goal is to awaken the Dharmakaya within. It is important to note that this initial awakening of the bodhicitta does not at once transform one to complete Buddhahood however, it does initiate the journey through the ten stages of bodhisattvahood.⁴

The first stage (*Pramudita*) is the stage of joy. At this stage, the bodhisattva emerges from her self-centred contemplation of Nirvana, and instead focuses her energy on helping other sentient beings. The heart of the bodhisattva refuses to be buried in the silent grave of annihilation while suffering continues in this world. Furthermore, she realises that Nirvana is nothing but a sham, and just as unreal as any worldly existence. This emergence is accompanied by an intense feeling of joy. It is also at this point that the bodhisattva attains her holy nature for the first time and fully realises the twofold nature of sunyata. It is through her actions and meditations that the bodhisattva is born into the family of the Buddha.

The second stage (*Vimala*) is the stage of purity. By this stage, the heart of the bodhisattva is pure and full of tenderness. She fosters no anger or malice, is content with what she has and does not harbour any evil thoughts. In addition, the bodhisattva has attained the perfection of discipline, and lives according to the precepts of morality and urges others to do so by teaching and by example. She is walking in the eightfold noble path.

The third stage (*Prabhakari*) is the stage of illumination. At this stage the bodhisattva gains the most penetrating insights into the true nature of things, and gains the perfection of patience.

The fourth stage (*Arcismati*) is the stage of inflammation. By this stage the 'fiery crucible' of the bodhicitta has burned away all remaining traces of ignorance and evil, and the bodhisattva has attained the perfection of bravery. At this stage, the bodhisattva places extra emphasis on practising the thirty-seven virtues that are conducive to the perfection of the bodhicitta. These are divided into seven categories:

The four contemplations, the four righteous efforts, the four forces of will, the five powers, the five functions, the seven constituents of the bodhi, and the eightfold noble path.

The fifth stage (*Sudurjaya*) is the stage of utmost invincibility. At this stage the bodhisattva has developed the intellectual power to penetrate deep into the system of existence, and attains the perfection of meditative concentration that allows her to gain transcendental knowledge.

The sixth stage (*Abhimukhi*) is the stage of 'showing one's face'. The bodhisattva enters this stage by reflecting on the essence of all dharmas. Upon perceiving they are all of one nature, her heart is filled with great love. She then proceeds to contemplate the development of evils in general. She has attained the perfection of insight, and is now considered an arhat in addition to being a bodhisattva.

The seventh stage (*Durangama*) is the stage of "going far away". At this stage the bodhisattva gains knowledge of expedient means, and is skilled in using them. She continues to pay homage to the Buddhas, even though she realises that they are not radically different creatures from her. She now lives on a higher plane of spirituality, but she does not withdraw from the world of particulars and senses. She practices all ten virtues of perfection (*paramitas*), and exercises great mercy toward all beings.

The eighth stage (*Acala*) is that of immovability. At this stage the bodhisattva acquires the highest, perfect knowledge, which is non-conscious and non-deliberate and she has lost the idea of duality. In addition, she no longer has any desire for Buddhahood or Nirvana. She is characterised by a state of saintly innocence, spontaneous activity, and of divine playfulness, which is perfect, ideal freedom.

The ninth stage (*Sadhumati*) is the stage of good intelligence or wisdom. The acquisition of the four types of comprehensive knowledge and the ten holy powers of the Buddha mark this stage. In addition the bodhisattva has completed the perfection of power/strength (*bala*).

The tenth stage (*Dharmamegha*) is the stage of the "Clouds of Dharma". By this final stage the bodhisattva is practically a Buddha. She practices all virtues of purity and is fortified with great power and intelligence. All her deeds and actions are directed towards the ten powers, the four convictions, and the eighteen unique characteristics of the Buddha. She is the personification of love and sympathy, and is

able to preach to the entire world equally. She realises the last of the *Samadhis*, and is consecrated by the Buddhas for having reached the highest principle, next to the Buddha.

The original prevailing view of the amount of time that is required to complete this development from beginning bodhisattva to the highest stage of bodhisattvahood was that it took three immeasurable kalpas, or aeons. It would take one kalpa to complete the first stage, then another to progress to the seventh stage and then one more for stages eight through ten.⁵ This doctrine of the three immeasurable kalpas was taken literally by early Indian scholars, but was rejected by some Chinese sects, and bypassed completely by later Indian sects of Mahayana Buddhism because it “is patently hyperbolic, and serves merely to make graphic how long and arduous the course it, and how great a distance stands between the beginning bodhisattva and the great saviour bodhisattvas on the highest stage” (Robinson 101).

The Bodhisattva and the Three Vehicles

The bodhisattva is usually categorised and contrasted with the sravaka and the pratyekabuddha. The sravaka originally referred to the direct disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, but eventually came to refer to all the followers of Theravada (or Hinayana) Buddhism.⁶ The sravaka does not think independently and thus is unable to discover the path to salvation on his own. Instead, he is endowed with a pious heart and is willing to listen to the instructions of the Buddha, to believe in him, and to faithfully observe the moral precepts given by him. The goal of the sravaka is to attain the level of arhat, which is the highest level of enlightenment in the Theravada tradition. Such a person has escaped transmigration within the six lower paths of existence (Watson 326).

The pratyekabuddha, in contrast with the sravaka, is one who has gained an understanding of truth through his or her own efforts, not by listening to the teachings of the Buddha. His or her enlightenment comes from “observing the pattern of interdependent development or ... cause (*hetu*) and condition (*pratyaya*).”⁷ Such an individual gains enlightenment by himself and for himself alone. “Religiously considered, a Pratyekabuddha is cold, impassive, egoistic, and lacks love for all mankind” (Suzuki 9).

The sravaka, pratyekabuddha and bodhisattva were at one point in early Mahayanist thought considered to be legitimate vehicles (*yana*)

to enlightenment. However, Mahayanists would eventually place the greatest emphasis on the vehicle of the bodhisattva (bodhisattvayana) because she aims at the salvation of herself and of all other sentient beings. This is in contrast with the sravaka and the pratyekabuddha, who only aim for their own enlightenment and salvation. As a result, the bodhisattva became known as the greater vehicle (*Mahayana*), since it entailed the salvation of all, and not merely a select few. The paths of the sravaka and the pratyekabuddha became known as the lesser or deficient vehicles (*Hinayana*), because they only allow for the salvation of the practitioner himself.

By the time of the appearance of *The Lotus Sutra*, the vehicles of the sravaka and the pratyekabuddha were altogether rejected as means to salvation. The enlightenment that is achieved by means of these two vehicles is viewed as illusory, and the quest for this imagined enlightenment is not enlightenment at all, but mere ignorance (Hurvitz XX).

The Bodhisattva as the One Vehicle

Since *The Lotus Sutra* is agreed to be the most influential Mahayana Buddhist text, it is wise to turn to it to discern and examine the place that the bodhisattva holds in the Mahayanist tradition. One of the main themes of the *Lotus* is that there is only one means to salvation, and that is the One Vehicle (*ekayana*) which is the vehicle of the Buddha (*buddhayana*). In *The Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha articulates that what was once considered to be legitimate means to salvation or enlightenment was merely an expedient means used by the Buddha at a time when people were not ready or willing to hear the truth. At face value, it appears that the *Lotus* rejects not only the vehicles of the sravaka and the pratyekabuddha, but also that of the bodhisattva. However, upon closer inspection of the text, it appears that the One Vehicle may in fact be the vehicle of the bodhisattva and that the bodhisattvayana and the buddhayana are one and the same.

Striking evidence for such a claim can be found in several passages of *The Lotus Sutra*, the first of which is chapter three, *Simile and Parable*, in the parable of the burning house. Here, a rich man realises that his old mansion is in flames and is on the verge of collapsing. However, his children, who are young and ignorant, are completely unaware of any danger. They enjoy their lives in the

mansion, and are not willing to leave. The father persuades the children to leave by telling them that there are goat-carts, deer-carts, and ox-carts outside waiting for them, and all they have to do to claim them is leave the burning house. The children, who are fond of such rare treasures, then leave the house. The rich man is relieved that his children are no longer in any danger. Upon exiting, the children turn to their father and demand their respective goat-carts, deer-carts, and ox-carts. Since the man's wealth is limitless, he felt that it would be wrong to give his sons small, inferior carriages drawn by goats or deer. Nor would it be fair to discriminate among the children, so with his vast riches he gives all of his children the most valuable of all vehicles and presents each of them with a large, beautiful, and luxurious ox-cart. The explanation given by the Buddha that follows the parable is that just like the rich man, the Buddha found a need to persuade his children to leave the realm of samsara, but found that they were too attached to it to give it up freely. As such, he promised them rewards if they did as he said. These rewards were the vehicles of the sravaka, the pratyekabuddha, and the bodhisattva. However, this promise was merely an expedient means used by the Buddha for the sake of the living beings. There is only one vehicle, the *Ekayana*, which is also the *buddhayana*, which is superior to the three vehicles, and is available to all.

If one inspects the parable of the burning house, one is quick to notice that the goat-cart represents the vehicle of the sravaka, the deer-cart represents the vehicle of the pratyekabuddha, and the ox-cart represents the vehicle of the bodhisattva.

When the children leave the burning house, however, there is only one vehicle outside for them: the ox-cart. The symbolism in the parable suggests that the one vehicle is the bodhisattvayana. If this is the case, then it appears that the Buddha is suggesting that there is only one way to enlightenment or salvation, and that is the way of the bodhisattva.

Another striking passage that supports the view that the bodhisattvayana is the One Vehicle is in chapter sixteen, *The Life Span of the Thus Come One*. In this chapter, the Buddha reveals that the stories that he told about how he achieved enlightenment in his most recent lifetime as Siddhartha Gautama of the Shakya clan and the stories that he entered extinction in Nirvana were all expedient means. He had, in fact, attained perfect enlightenment in the far distant past,

and made the claim that he had entered extinction to create a sense of urgency among those who, because they assumed the Buddha would always be with them, were less than enthusiastic about achieving their own enlightenment and remained attached to their lives. He does in fact return to the *saha* world when he sees it is time once again to preach the law, and has done so innumerable times in the past. The Buddha then goes on to explain:

Why do I do this? The Thus Come one perceives the true aspect of the threefold world exactly as it is. There is no ebb or flow of birth and death, and there is no existing in this world and later entering extinction. It is neither substantial nor empty, neither consistent nor diverse. Nor is it what those who dwell in the threefold world perceive it to be. All such things the Thus Come One sees clearly and without error. (Watson 226)

It appears from the above passage that even the concepts of Nirvana and samsara are mere expedient means, and that there is no real truth in the claim that the Buddha achieved extinction after his bodily death. However, the chief characteristic that distinguishes the Buddha from all others is that he has attained absolutely perfect enlightenment and extinction of Nirvana. He is no longer subject to the laws of karma and has completely escaped the realm of samsara. But it appears as if the Buddha is claiming that there is no Nirvana, and there is no samsara, and that the Buddha does become reborn in human form, albeit very rarely. If this is true, then there appears to be nothing that truly distinguishes the Buddha from a bodhisattva. As was shown above, by the time a bodhisattva has reached the tenth stage of bodhisattvahood, she has attained all the virtues, powers, and characteristics of the Buddha. From this it is possible to conclude that there is no real distinction between the bodhisattva that has achieved the tenth stage of bodhisattvahood and the Buddha. From this it would appear to follow that there is no real difference between the buddhayana and the bodhisattvayana, and that the two are actually one and the same.

There also appears to be further textual evidence that the way of the Buddha and the way of the bodhisattva are one. Since the term buddhayana is so rich in meaning and can be interpreted by different people at different times to mean different things, other words are used

to represent this vehicle. Words such as “the unique Vehicle,’ ‘the One Vehicle,’ the unique Buddha Vehicle,’ ‘the Great Vehicle,’ the unique Great Vehicle,’ ‘the bodhisattva-vehicle,’ etc” (Hurvitz XX). It is this last interpretation that should be pointed out, because by interpreting the buddhayana as “the bodhisattva-vehicle,” it appears that even the text of *The Lotus Sutra* conflates the vehicles of the Buddha and the bodhisattva into one.

Conclusion

If Mhayana is “The Greater Vehicle”, and the way of the bodhisattva is “The One Vehicle” as it appears to be in *The Lotus Sutra*, then it would not be incorrect to view Mahayana Buddhism as the religion, not of the Buddha, but of the bodhisattva. Since the bodhisattva is the embodiment of love and compassion, and at the tenth stage of bodhisattvahood she has attained all the virtues, powers, and knowledge of the Buddha, such a claim would not denigrate the status of Mahayana Buddhism to that of a saint worshipping cult. On the contrary, instead it has opened up the rewards of Buddhahood and salvation to all who desire them, instead of limiting them to the select few. This is why Mahayana Buddhism lives up to its name: we are all bodhisattvas. Now it is up to us to cultivate our Buddha nature and claim our ox-cart.

Glossary⁹

<i>Arhat</i>	“Worthy One”, a being who has attained a state where no further learning may be done. Upon death the arhat attains Nirvana.
<i>Asuras</i>	A demon or evil spirit.
<i>Bodhicitta</i>	Enlightened mind or awakened mind, a central concept in Mahayana Buddhism.
<i>Dharma</i>	1. The teachings of the Buddha. 2. The appearance of the phenomenal realm. 3. Mental constructs.
	<i>Dharmakaya</i> 1. One of three bodies of the Buddha, the true nature of the Buddha as transcendental reality and unified with all things. 2. The law or teachings of the Buddha.
<i>Eightfold (Noble) Path</i>	The path leading out of Samsara and into Nirvana:

1. perfect view, 2. perfect resolve, 3. perfect speech, 4. perfect conduct, 5. perfect livelihood, 6. perfect effort, 7. perfect mindfulness and 8. perfect concentration.

Expedient Means

A device or technique employed to lead one to the truth and out of suffering by way of deception or incentives.

Four Elements

Earth, air, fire and water.

Four Types of Fearlessness

(Similar to the Four Certainties) Four qualities that characterise the Buddha: fearlessness of 1. preaching his enlightenment, 2. he has extinguished all spiritual defilements (desires and karma), 3. karma and desires are obstacles to enlightenment which can be overcome, 4. Buddhism is the means to escape Samsara.

Hinayana

see *Theravada*

Ichchantika

1. An unbeliever with no wish to attain Buddhahood. 2. A bodhisattva who refuses to attain Nirvana until all beings are free from suffering.

Karma

lit. deed or action, the universal and moral law of cause and effect.

Mahayana

One or two primary Buddhist sects, also known as the "Great Vehicle" by Mahayanists as it preaches that enlightenment is attainable by all beings.

Nirvana

lit. blown out or extinguished, to escape the cycle of birth and death. Different sects attribute or emphasise various characteristics of Nirvana: the attainment of perfect wisdom is a characteristic of Mahayanist Nirvana.

Pranidhanas

A vow taken by a bodhisattva (also taken by laymen, nuns and monks in Mahayana Buddhism); it includes the vow to attain enlightenment and to lead all beings out of suffering.

Pratyekabuddha

A self-enlightened being with no intention of enlightening others. Many of the common attributes of the Buddha are lacking in Pratyekabuddha. They are placed between the Buddha and arhats.

Saha World

lit. endurance world, our world as typified by suffering.

Samadhi

A state of intense concentration producing inner calm.

Samsara

The cycle of birth and death, typified by suffering.

Sravaka

(also Shravaka) lit. hearer or voice-hearer. It

initially referred to one who listened to the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha but, later became one of the three vehicles and is associated with an arhat.

Skandhas

An aggregate of five things (often associated with perceptions) which form the basis of personal identity. Skandhas continue on after death to form karmic continuity between lives. 1 corporeality, 2 sensation, 3 perception, 4 mental constructs, 5 consciousness.

Six (Lower) Paths of Existence The realms in which unenlightened beings exist; in ascending order: 1. hell, 2. the realm of hungry spirits, 3. beasts, 4. asuras, 5. human beings and 6. heavenly beings.

Sunyata

Void, emptiness or no-thing. A central concept in Mahayana Buddhism, emptiness is a unifying principle of reality, which signifies the non-duality of existence.

Sutra

Religious texts, the discourses of the Buddha, thought to have been recorded between 1st century BCE and 6th century CE.

Tathagata

lit. "has Come One", one of the ten epithets of the Buddha.

Theravada

One of two primary Buddhist sects. It preaches that total enlightenment or Buddhahood is too difficult to attain for most beings and thus one should aim for individual enlightenment and becoming an arhat as opposed to the enlightenment of all beings. Hinayana or "Lesser Vehicle" is a pejorative term for Theravada Buddhism.

Notes

¹Although traditionally bodhisattvas are depicted as males in Buddhist Sutras, one of the most famous of all the bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara, (Chinese: Kuan-yin), is depicted in art in female form. In keeping with this tradition, female pronouns will be used unless referring to a specific male depiction in a sutra.

³D. T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*. (Schoken Books: New York, 1963) p.294

⁴It is my assumption that the bodhicitta is just another name for the Buddha nature that the Mahayanists believe all sentient beings possess.

⁵D. T. Suzuki criticises this gradation of one's spiritual progress as seeming

arbitrary, unnecessary, and artificial. However, given the important role the bodhisattva holds in the Mahayanist tradition, such criticism may be short sighted. Having a way of distinguishing the extent to which one has realised one's bodhicitta allows one to distinguish humans from bodhisattvas more accurately, and gives one a reason to place more emphasis on giving obeisance to a particular Bodhisattva, such as Kuan-yin, over any of the millions of others.

⁶ Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion* Second Edition. (Dickenson Publishing Company, Inc.: California, 1977) p. 100

⁷ Burton Watson, *The Lotus Sutra*. (Columbia University Press: New York, 1993) p. 337

⁸ Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*. (Columbia University Press: New York, 1976) Preface p. xix.

⁹ The author is indebted to Neil McDonald who composed and provided this glossary.

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An Evolutionary Metaphysics of Causality

KEVAN EDWARDS*

A. Introduction

THERE ARE THREE points I need by way of introduction. The first has been made over and over and has, if nothing else, gallons of spilled philosophical ink as testament to its truth: *the notion of causation is pervasive*; causes, effects, causal inferences, predictions, explanations, are everywhere we look, reason and act. Wesley Salmon, to choose a contemporary example, makes this point with incisive clarity in his introduction to *Causality and Explanation*.¹ He states:

The concept of causality pervades our thinking about ourselves, about our environment, and about the entire universe we live in ... Causal concepts are ubiquitous: in every branch of theoretical science—physical, biological,

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behavioural, and social; in the practical disciplines—architecture, ecology, engineering, law, and medicine; in everyday life—making decision regarding ourselves, our loved ones, other living persons, and members of future generations.

The second point I want to help myself to is that contemporary philosophical discourse has a fundamental preoccupation with exploring realism and in particular, a perhaps not ill-founded belief that a basic commitment to materialism ought to somehow entail some degree of realism. I suspect that though there are many implicit motives undergirding this faith, the basic motivation typically stems from two concerns: first, admitting varying degrees of antirealism tends to have the feel of a slippery slope; i.e., it is *prima facie* difficult to admit ‘antirealistic’ ontologies without sacrificing the things that one *does* want to hang on to (say, for example a strong sense of materialism). Second, that materialism is an operative methodological assumption supporting the unprecedented success of contemporary sciences appears to play heavily in its favour. It is by taking materialism as the whole story about reality that we have moved from a theory of heat as phlogiston to heat as a quantitative measure of mean kinetic molecular energy.²

Intuitions about realism come what may, this paper proceeds from the assumption that realism is an important topic and that it is typical to *hope* to entail realism about X’s from ontological commitments regarding a domain to which X’s belong. In particular, if the perceived problem facing realism about X’s is that they are fundamentally conceptual, mentalistic or otherwise *intentional* entities, the project of underwriting realism about X’s often turns to an underlying materialistic framework and the project becomes one of cashing out a correspondence relation, property law or identity between the intentional entities and entities which are acceptable within the materialist framework. In other words, given a robust conceptual notion, and an underlying faith in materialism the temptation, where possible, is to preserve realism through a project of *naturalization*.

The third point I am starting from is the existence of what has come to be known as “Evolutionary Epistemology”, in particular the suggestion sometimes made that Evolutionary Epistemology (henceforth “EE”) can provide a new framework within which a rethinking of fundamental ontological problems and underlying

assumptions can be motivated. Roughly, the geography generally accepted by EE is that human cognition is the product of, in some construal or another, an evolutionary process. Thus, appeals to evolution may –this is one of the primary loci of debate– allow us to draw conclusions regarding the ontological status of the contents of cognitive states, most notably our representations of external reality. To put things even more contentiously, EE suggests that a strong mind/world distinction is simply false; that qua products of evolving system (s) it only makes sense to claim, or in a slightly weaker form to hypothesise, that our cognitive systems and their contents are grounded in the same ontological category, the only ontological category, of so-called external or metaphysical reality. In its most naïve incarnations, EE claims that our cognitive systems have become so accurately ‘tuned’ that their contents are in point of fact *the* salient features of reality. Critics counter that this kind of Lamarckian adaptationism rightly dropped out of evolutionary biology long ago, and that it is wrong-headed to take mother nature seriously as a designer with a guiding intention in mind. This tension notwithstanding, EE suggests an interesting, refreshing, and some say promising point of view.

Together, the above three points provide a strong motivation for examining, through the eyes of Evolutionary Epistemology, the question of what kind of realist ontology lies behind our conceptual notion of causality. One would certainly expect that EE would have the most to say about issues that are as pervasive as causality, in particular because causality appears to be a basic structural feature of the world and hence a tight constraint on evolutionary processes. Moreover, in keeping with an essentially material realist impulse in contemporary philosophy (point 2) as well as a basic premise operative in EE that we evolve as part of reality rather than distinct from it, one would expect EE to take a particular interest in issues regarding the ontological status of causality. Hence my project will be to give a preliminary examination of what light Evolutionary Epistemology can shed on the ontological status of causality.

My intention is not be as ambitious as arguing that EE can supply a fully robust and guaranteed notion of ‘metaphysical’ realism for causation. Indeed I suspect this would be a futile project. My aim is to do a combination of two things: 1) Begin delineating what kind of notion of realism about causation EE *can* hope to underwrite, and 2) Examine what EE has to say about the forms of causal realism it cannot

supply an argument in favour of. In many respects I think this latter topic is the more interesting one and yet strangely ignored. If our conception of causality is a product of a cognitive apparatus which is itself a product of evolutionary forces that we know to be hopelessly complicated and in a significant sense not forward-looking, this may set important limitations on the nature of our concept of causality generally. I will suggest that one important moral to draw is that we may be left with a concept of causality which allows us to function successfully in a structured world better than it allows us to understand the nature of the structure itself. In short, our concept of causality may be designed to work with reality rather than to yield understanding of it.

B. General sketch of the argument from evolution to a metaphysics of causation

Much to my amazement I have yet to come across a clear exposition of an argument for causal realism from the point of view of evolutionary epistemology and will thus rely on my own formulation³. The argument proceeds from two admittedly contentious assumptions. These I am going to gloss. Partly this is to keep the exposition finite, more honestly it is because I am not confident that these points *can* be fleshed out, at least not as of yet. Therefore, the argument I am giving is substantially idealised as it presupposes preliminary work which shows no signs of being completed. I take this as a potential point of weakness though not a damning objection to the project for several reasons: First, because the current project is to examine what degree of metaphysical realism it may be *possible* for EE to underwrite not to give an actual argument. Second, it doesn't strike me as particularly exceptional that one theory should be dependent on another, especially when one or more of the theories in question is empirical and may only be infallible at some idealised end of science anyway.

The two things I will more or less be taking for granted are as follows:

1. An appropriate theory of evolution.
2. A robust conceptual notion of causation.

Regarding Assumption 1:

Evolutionary theory is still in its infancy and issues as general as what makes up the appropriate “units of selection” remain unresolved. Not surprisingly, what legitimately constitutes a “system” to which evolution applies is likewise the subject of continuing debate. Speaking very generally it is possible to divide the field into two camps, the first of which adheres to a rigid conception of the proper domain of evolutionary systems. One version of this maintains the gene as the central, legitimate unit relevant to evolution⁴. Another version, such as that defended by Michael Ruse, limits evolution to what Ruse refers to as a strictly “Darwinian” account. In part this latter subdivision often amounts to more of a kind of skeptical outlook regarding the legitimacy of wider appeals than an explicit rejection of them⁵.

The second camp holds that to varying degrees evolution can be generalised across a broader domain of applicability. Without aggressively choosing sides it seems much easier to get an EE account of realism off the ground with the resources of a broadly construed notion of evolution than from the point of view that an account needs to bottom out in a story strictly about genes or even biology generally. In the case of underwriting a conceptual notion of causality it is hard to see how a useful connection could ever be drawn between the relevant concepts and an hypothesised biological basis. My tendency is to favour an approach like that of David Hull’s and claim that the general principles at work in an evolving system can apply at many different levels⁶. The reasons for holding this include that it seems irrefutable that a system which satisfies certain essentially abstract requirements will in some strong sense “evolve” (examples to follow) and I see no need nor hope of curtailing this generality. Hull, for example, says the following on the topic of critics of a more generally applicable account of evolution.

People tend to reject selection models of conceptual change out of hand because they have a simplistic understanding of biological evolution. Most objections to selection operating in conceptual change would count just as decisively against selection models in biological evolution. As it turns out, the amount of increased generality needed to accommodate the full range of biological phenomena turns out to be extensive

enough to include social and conceptual evolution as well.
(402-3)

A quick examination of several somewhat trite examples may be helpful. Imagine a group of friends who tend to refer to each other using nicknames. Through a slip of the tongue, or from somewhere outside of this “system” names come into use and are in a sense “selected” and maintained in usage because relative to other names on offer they better satisfy some (probably quite poorly specified) criterion – perhaps they are humorous or indicate some trait or are otherwise meaningful in some way. Somewhat less trivially, take the hypothetical situation of a group of beings on the cusp of beginning to use a basic system of signs. Presumably, the most primitive signs would be at best indexical⁷, i.e. would have referents but no relational structure. Imagine that these beings are faced with a very difficult environment, one in which they sit somewhere in the middle of a competitive food chain and are perpetually at risk and in need of locating food. Given a charitable filling out of this “system” it seems natural to expect that after some passage of time, some subset of the signs used by these beings would involve, at a minimum, a reliable distinction between ‘friend’ and ‘foe’. Roughly, one would expect certain signs to become entrenched as ways of communicating the presence of a possible food source, and others to communicate the presence of danger. Signs used in these specific sorts of contexts which conflated these two types of referent would likely not see continued usage.

The above appear to be legitimate cases of “evolving” systems. What this suggests is that evolution can be treated as a broadly applicable abstract notion.

One point that should be made is that although a generalised notion of evolution may appear to make EE’s task easier, it may also come at a cost. Having a generalised theory of evolution on hand would not necessarily resolve the question of what constitute appropriate *applications* of the theory. Moreover, applications at different ‘levels’ of organisation may overlap and selection forces operative at different levels would be expected, in at least some instances, to stack up against each other⁸.

Regarding Assumption 2:

The main problem plaguing an appeal to a conceptual analysis of causation is that there doesn't seem to be one, or at least there is no clearly dominant candidate. The most biting criticism motivated by this is that there is currently no reigning champion of conceptual analyses of causality because the problem is fundamentally intractable. While it is *possible* that a relatively simple account, yet one which is capable of capturing our conceptual notion of causality, is on the verge of discovery, it nonetheless seems likely that this criticism may have hit the mark. However, it may yet be hasty to assume that this discredits what EE has to offer. What is required for the EE argument to go through is not that we can actually fill in a completed conceptual analysis of causality. Even if a complete conceptual analysis is only possible in some highly idealised (say infinite) analysis, the lesson we should take from this may be not that EE is misguided but rather that our cognitive abilities to represent reality at finer and finer resolutions outruns our ability to capture this reality in a relatively simple-minded analysis.⁹

Even if a complete conceptual analysis is too much to expect in practice it nevertheless seems reasonable to expect that in an idealised formulation it would satisfy a basic minimum structure. What I suggest is that a robust conceptual analysis of causality would have to include both causally efficacious *entities* (presumably these would amount to 'objects' and/or 'events' under some construal or another) and some notion of *generalised descriptions of relations* between these entities (presumably these would be either laws or dispositions/propensities¹⁰).

The Argument

Roughly, the bare structure of an argument from 1. and 2. to a metaphysics of causality proceeds as follows: The general version is that through a (perhaps hopelessly complicated) process of evolution our cognitive apparatus has been selected by virtue of its ability to accurately represent objectively salient features of the world. In other words (one of) the "purpose(s)" of our cognitive apparatus is to accurately mirror metaphysical reality. By extension, our conceptual causal projections, the entities and covering descriptions, have been selected over time such that the current state of our conceptual notions

of causality must accurately represent correlative features in the world, namely a metaphysical causal structure. The presumption is that if it radically failed to do so our conceptual causal notions would have been selected against in favour of a more successful conceptual schema.

The pervasive nature of causality helps bolster such a case; if there is anything that we qua beings that have survived thus far in our interactions with the world had better have right in our conceptual framework it is those concepts that refer to the deepest and most pervasive structural facts about the world, namely its causal structure. The only way to explain the success of rational behaviour is to presume that our conceptual notion of causality corresponds to metaphysical facts about the world we have evolved in.

Further details can be added to flesh out a more compelling story. One way to do this is to begin attributing more specific functions to various aspects of cognition. For example, a complicated story could be told about how causal inference patterns are hypothesised and tested through both direct perception (assuming EE also has a story to tell about the veridical nature of perception) and the success or failure of behaviour based on these inferences. Another way to strengthen the argument is to draw a parallel between evidence produced by developmental psychology and the evolution of cognitive systems. In *Explanation as Orgasm* Alison Gopnik combines both of these ideas, arguing that “a particular kind of cognitive system, the theory formation system, . . . is devoted to uncovering the underlying causal structure of the world” (101) and that “children are sensitive to the underlying causal structure of the world and seek to form causal representations at a much earlier age than we had previously supposed”(104). Gopnik also goes on to suggest that active intervention in the world helps to strengthen the veridical nature of our concept of causality. She states:

There is a payoff for this activity in the long run, of course. Getting a veridical view of the causal nature of the world allows for a wide range of accurate and non obvious predictions, and these accurate predictions, in turn, allow one to accomplish other types of goals that are more directly related to survival.” (107)

The above sketch of a possible argument may not be entirely persuasive but hopefully it conveys some of the appeal of the EE

approach and suggests that EE does have something significant to say about the metaphysics of causality. In the following section some difficulties facing the approach are addressed and I draw some general conclusions regarding what EE can hope to achieve.

C. Objections and Responses

Objection 1: *Surely, the obvious fallibilism of at least some causal claims means that realism regarding the underpinnings of our concept(s) of causality is absurd.*

Reply 1: It does seem that the fallibilism of specific causal concepts is unavoidable and poses a problem for an account that argues from the existence and genesis of concepts to the metaphysical reality of their worldly correlates. There are two possible responses I can see: The first is to weaken the specificity of the realism that EE claims to support. In other words, give up on grounding a metaphysics for specific causal claims and turn instead to some notion of *reliabilism*. For EE, reliabilism can cash out quite nicely in terms of a notion of *adequacy*. What adequacy means is going to be dependent on what kind of account of evolution one is working with, but in general a conceptual causal schema will have to mirror reality to the extent necessary for it to have survived whatever selection process it has.

The second response, which I think is the much more appealing of the two, can be described in two stages: Stage one is to embrace a methodological doctrine which claims that it is *counterexamples* and not *exceptions* that impugn theories¹¹. Stage two is to drum up a viable story to explain away the cases of error as exceptions. Roughly, stage two involves the recognition that one's causal concepts have been designed by evolution to accurately mirror reality *in specific contexts*. The literature on EE is littered with the realisation that appeals to evolution in order to underwrite realism are restricted to the limited domain in which the item has actually evolved. To refer to a few such descriptions of this limitation: Gerhard Vollmer states the following: "The world to which our cognitive apparatus was adapted during evolution is but a section of the real world ... *Mecocosm* is, crudely speaking, a world of medium dimensions"(87 –my emphasis). Franz Wuketits echoes this point in the following: "From the evolutionary point of view it is clear, if not trivial, that the populations and species

live in particular *ecological niches*, that they have evolved under the particular circumstances of the respective niche" (89 –my emphasis).

From the point of view of attempting to preserve a notion of realism I think a slightly stronger story can be told, if only because it deals specifically with the origins of error. I will give a quick sketch of what I have in mind. It is instructive to notice that the above realisation, that evolution occurs within a restricted domain, amounts to the acknowledgement that appeals to selection history are essentially *normative*; the actual conditions in which something has functioned successfully and was selected for this ability can be seen as the "normal conditions" for the "proper functioning" of this item¹². This implies that our causal concepts accurately mirror reality in this normative sense; in contexts that differ significantly from the "normal conditions" for the tokening of a causal concept we can expect varying degrees of representational failure.

The import of these two responses to the objection from fallibilism prompts two conclusions: First, at greater degrees of generality, i.e. looking at an overall conceptual causal schema rather than specific claims in specific contexts, one would expect to find a higher degree of reliability built into our causal concepts. Second, the EE picture can be seen as essentially normative; it guarantees that our causal concepts mirror reality in selective ways and selective contexts. To go beyond this is to extrapolate from normal conditions and we can expect decreasing reliability in such cases.

There is a final point that can be made on the subject of the fallibilism of our causal reasoning, if only because it is curious. Vollmer states the following, stressing that adaptation is never perfect: "The adaptation of an organism to its environment is never ideal. . . . the process of adaptation is not only affected but also counteracted by mutation pressures" (78). My addition to this point is to remark that not only do evolving processes require a mechanism of *selection* but also an analogue to *mutation*. In order for our conceptual notion of causality to have evolved such that it mirrors reality with reliable accuracy it is likely that it also must be prone to occasional error. While it must be the case that our cognitive systems have become organised such that these errors neither proliferate nor have disastrous effects, the fact that error appears to be necessary to an optimal evolutionary system is nevertheless an interesting twist.

Objection 2: *EE can at best tell us a more or less convincing “just so story” about the relation between our concept of cause and a correlative structural nexus in the world.*

Reply 2: To state it bluntly I think the “just-so story” objection is impossible to deny and thus I will not waste any time attempting to do so. I made a previous comment that a generalisable theory of evolving systems applicable at a variety of different ‘levels’ begins to suggest an incredibly complex (verging on holistic?) picture of evolution. Moreover, in response to the previous objection I suggested that evolution could be seen as fundamentally normative and that this normativity can be seen as derivable from an analysis of conditions present in actual cases of selection. Hence it looks like if one wants to tell a story about causal reality one needs to tell a just-so story that amounts to a complete spelling out of evolutionary history. This is surely a kind of story that simply cannot be told. How then can one claim to underwrite a metaphysics of causation? I have two suggestions: The first is that there may be ways to distinguish between better and worse just-so stories even though none of them are properly complete. For example, Alan Goldman suggests the following:

Just-so stories illustrating in this way how a trait might have been the object of selection... have genuine plausibility when the more general counterfactual claim that they dramatise is plausible. Selected traits must enhance fitness in generally prevalent conditions ...” (42)

Goldman’s acknowledgement is that our just-so stories are more plausible if the generalised counterfactuals they appeal to are themselves plausible. On this kind of criterion the case for the reality of causation looks quite strong due to the near ubiquity and incredible efficacy of causal reasoning. That our causal reasoning *would* serve us well in warning us that stepping out in front of a moving car and other such ‘dangerous’ activities could cause us great damage is surely part of the explanation of why we have such abilities. To not have these conceptual notions is to be in significant danger in genuinely plausible counterfactual situations.

The second suggestion I want to make is that the impossibility of telling a complete just-so story should be taken as a moral to be drawn from EE rather than a criticism. Specifically, the moral is that when we look at why our conceptual notion of causality has survived,

EE suggests that it must accurately mirror reality. However, unpacking this slightly, what EE suggests is that evolution has tuned our conceptual notion of cause to reality, not that it has given us tools for explicitly comprehending reality. There is a subtle distinction here. Evolution doesn't care if we *understand* causality clearly, all it cares is that we have ended up with something, perhaps through a completely irretrievable process, which *serves* us well. In other words, the fact that EE gives us a strong assurance that there are metaphysical facts and that our concept of causality successfully hooks onto them does not mean that we can re-tell the process of how evolution got us here, nor that we can completely understand the operation of the faculties we have ended up with. Ronald deSousa offers a vivid analogy to explain how an appeal to evolution can make sense out of the fact that we can do something without being able to understand how:

For natural selection is the ultimate anarchy of hackers, and every programmer knows how a program that a few dozen hackers have tinkered with, let alone a few million, can become hopelessly opaque. The devices hacked together by evolution will sometimes be baroque in the extreme." (180)

Thus, it is perfectly compatible and even explicable by the story told from the point of view of evolution that the extent to which we have a conceptual schema that accurately mirrors the metaphysics of causality outruns the extent to which we can explicitly understand it.

***Objection 3:** Biological evolution and arguments from a notion of evolution sufficient to get realism off the ground are fundamentally disanalogous in the following respect: Biological Evolution is expressly non-teleological and cannot be rightly thought of as progressing towards anything. Evolution does not "have anything in mind". Therefore, to suggest that our conceptual notion of cause has evolved towards a better representation of some metaphysical correlate is a non-starter.*

Reply 3: Actually, evolution may well be able to yield a notion of purpose though one which may be decidedly backward looking. One of the major streams of thought on the topic of 'function', considered to have begun with Larry Wright's paper "Functions", is that functions are best understood according to their aetiology. Ruth Garrett Millikan, while rejecting Wright as her direct precursor, argues that an

item's "proper function" is in fact a theoretical definition of the thing's *purpose*.¹³ Hence, though evolution does not progress towards a given purpose, selection histories (or speculations of histories –as my response to the previous objection suggests may be necessary) may allow us to analyse what is, in a significant sense, something's *purpose*; or in other words what it is "meant" to do. Roughly then, the "purpose" of our conceptual notion of causality is to accurately represent metaphysical facts about the "external" world in which we have evolved and continue to reside. The way we extract this from history is by telling a plausible "just-so story" about the reasons for which our conceptual apparata and their representational functions were selected.

Objection 4: (A more difficult version of the previous objection) *Why should we conclude that "fitness" (in an oversimplified form = survival potential) should be tied to "truth"? Perhaps it is legitimate to claim that illusions can be of greater benefit than an isomorphism between our causal concepts and reality.*¹⁴

Reply 4: This objection accurately pinpoints some of the general limitations EE faces, most noticeably that it is an empirical theory and dependent on such things as a good "just-so story" in order to underwrite the teleology that it helps itself to. However, if EE is right in its hypothesis that it is evolution which is responsible for the correct functioning of our cognitive systems then perhaps this kind of empiricism is something we should learn to live with rather than treat as an intractable weakness. Moreover, the weakness inherent in the admission that the theory is empirical may not be as profound as it first appears. For example Richard Low describes the following example which *prima facie* seems to present a problem for EE:

There is the story of the lunatic who made the sun rise every morning. The sunrise times were entered in his calendar, shortly before, he stepped outside and ordered the sun to rise and behold it rose. How can it be proved to him that he is not the cause for the sunrise? Only by saying to him: "stay in bed one morning and see what happens then." To that, he will of course make the sound objection that he may not, because otherwise the world would perish. (217-18)

However, several points are easily overlooked: The man is explicitly

identified as a *lunatic*, and presumably this identification is patently obvious because his beliefs are simply wrong! The lunatic violates criterion that I have argued EE must embrace and can do so without giving up all hope of underwriting realism about causality. The lunatic's cognitive functions and in particular his conceptual view of causality are decidedly abnormal and I have suggested that EE can and must embrace a sense of normativity in order to account for unavoidable cases of erroneous causal reasoning.

It is worth stressing again that part of the motivation for looking at causality through the eyes of EE is the pervasive nature of causality. While I think EE must concede that its metaphysical hypotheses are both fallible and are the results of empirical theory, for a notion as ubiquitous as causality it is a very narrow wedge that can be fit between the veridical nature of our causal concepts in normal conditions and the possibility of an illusory reality which would nevertheless be sufficient to sustain these concepts through a long history of possible evolutionary dead-ends. This illusory reality would have to be of a mind-blowing sophistication to support the successful inferences necessary for it not to have been replaced by more veridical concepts along the way.

Objection 5: *Our cognitive capacities are limited, or coarsely grained in a sense that no one believes reality to be. Therefore, our conceptual notion of cause cannot expect to capture metaphysical causation proper.*

Reply 5: In fact, EE gives us reason to believe that our cognitive capacities are *essentially* more abstract than external reality: Surely having fallible concepts that allow us to take shortcuts in carving up the world in useful ways is far more important than fixating on every feature reality has to offer. If the point of this objection is that EE cannot hope to guarantee a *complete* picture of reality and by extension our conceptual notion of causality is at best a proper subset of the metaphysical nature of causality then this objection seems impossible to deny. Previous discussion of Vollmer's "mecocosm" and Wuketits' "cognitive niche" as well as my suggestion that appeals to evolution are essentially normative have already stressed this point. The moral to draw is that EE cannot guarantee that our concept of causality picks out each and every objectively salient feature of reality. However, this is not to say that the features it does pick out are not *real*.

Objection 6: *This is just a way to sanction our concept of causality. It starts with a conceptual analysis and then fixes it onto the world – but this is inevitably an imposition on reality, not a correlation with it. Legitimately “real” taxonomies cannot be selective in the sense of being coarsely grained where the choice of grains is imposed on the world rather than derived from it.*

Reply 6: This objection gives me the opportunity to drive home a specific point. This objection *reverses* what EE attempts to do. In a sense the EE project is transcendental in that it starts from what *is*, namely our conceptual notion of causality, and searches for what evolution tells us *must be the case* in order to account for this. Given a relatively weak, by contemporary standards, commitment to a material world, EE suggests that the only sense that can be made out of the existence of our concept of causality generally, the best brand of ‘just-so story’ on offer, is that there is a correlative metaphysical causal structure in the world.

In part the force of this objection turns on where *exactly* one draws the line between antirealism and realism but let me suggest the following without haggling over such details: What this objection rightly shows is that our causal concepts at any given point do not *fully* capture reality, but so what? This does not preclude a partial correlation (see the response to the previous objection), nor is it inexplicable from within a naturalistic framework. In other words, the taxonomy ‘imposed’ by our conception of causality reliably supervenes on ‘nature’s joints’, though admittedly fails to refer to all such joints. Moreover, EE gives us a plausible, naturalistic account of both why our conceptual taxonomies are necessarily limited and how we have arrived at one particular taxonomy rather than another (though this will, of course, be couched in terms of a more or less plausible just-so story).

Objection 7: *How is the following possible: If I come in from the cold, lukewarm water **causes** my hand to feel warm, whereas if I come in from a hot day the same water **causes** my hand to feel cool¹⁵.*

Reply 7: A point I suggested earlier is that EE challenges our conception of an inner-outerworld division. Thus, part of reality that can be relevant to our causal concepts is the state of our hand, in this case whether or not *it* is hot or cold. The objectivity of the causal powers of the water need not be threatened by perspectival differences arising from differences in the object with which the water interacts in

different cases. Notice that skepticism about the objectivity of the water's causal powers is parasitic on skepticism about the objectivity of the temperature of the water, yet this is something easy to verify in cases when it is necessary, namely by using a thermometer.

Objection 8: *All this may be fine and good but does nothing to counter a good skeptic or idealist. In fact, the whole story you have told can be couched in terms quite acceptable to either so it can't possibly be relied upon to underwrite realism.*

Reply 8: I am willing to concede this point but will say something about these types of criticism generally. At some point these sorts of skeptical arguments need to be accepted as *persistent* and *perpetually applicable*—let us call the species pp-skepticism. I suspect that no realist account of anything can defend itself against the pp-skeptic and that often it is a waste of time to try. Interestingly, it could even be argued that there are advantages from an evolutionary perspective to having imaginative capacities and curiosity drives¹⁶ which are designed to outrun any ability to provide proofs.

Another way to look at the problem of pp-skepticism is that it readily conflates two possible points of skeptical attack, namely:

1. realism as opposed to idealism/skeptical illusion
2. realism about underlying metaphysics in the face of limited epistemic access

The relevance of this distinction to the point at hand is that while EE attempts to address point 2., I am not sure that it claims to, nor should be asked to address point 1.. My project has been to examine attempts to answer point 2, partially because it at least seems possible.

Objection 9: *Evolution is an empirical theory and may be false. It is thus presumptuous to base something as strong as a metaphysical account of causality on it*

Reply 9: It has already been conceded that EE is both empirical and fallible. However, this objection is slightly different as it claims that evolution itself may be a flawed theory. If evolution is *radically* flawed, for example if it turns out that the world was created *ex nihilo* by some form of higher being, then it seems likely EE will have to bite the bullet and admit defeat. However, this seems unlikely and I do not suppose many contemporary scientists or philosophers lose sleep over this possibility.

There are also less radical ways in which evolution could be wrong. For example Stuart Kauffman argues that evolution needs to be heavily supplemented by another phenomenon he refers to as “spontaneous self-organisation”¹⁷. This kind of possibility I take quite seriously and Kauffman’s arguments are in many respects very compelling. On the other hand it is not clear that taking Kauffman seriously would undermine the general approach taken by EE. If anything, a stronger account of operative organisational principles would serve to strengthen EE’s position.

Objection 10: *Evolution depends on a notion of causality; an obvious example of this being the hypothesis that there is a causal connection between the shape of our conception of causality and the shape of the world. Isn’t this circular?*

Reply 10: Yes this is circular, but not in a way that is vicious. If EE is correct in that our conceptual notion of causality reliably hooks onto an existent metaphysical structure then there is no reason why evolution should not follow this structure. In fact, if evolution did not proceed according to the hypothesised causal structure of metaphysical reality this would amount to a *prima facie* objection to the account.

In the end, this objection may underscore the fact that in *some* loose sense EE presumes a notion of causal realism (see other comments that EE is not necessarily incompatible with certain brands of skepticism / idealism). The primary question EE is struggling to answer is not whether or not there is a metaphysical structure to the world; but rather, whether we have any reliable, guaranteed access to it. EE argues that we do, namely because evolution has left us with a conceptual apparatus that has evolved with the purpose of accurately mirroring this structure.

D. Conclusion

The conclusions to be drawn from an examination of the metaphysics of causality through the eyes of evolutionary epistemology are informative though not simple. Objections suggest that EE’s account of causal realism must accept itself as both empirical and fallible. I have suggested that it may be possible to vindicate this fallibility through the realisation that appeals to evolutionary processes

can generate a significant notion of normativity. I have also suggested that insofar as it is dependent on better or worse “just-so stories” the EE account may have a lesson to teach about how our conceptual notion of causation may in fact *work*, in terms of accurately mirroring metaphysical structures in the world, despite us having notorious trouble understanding how it does so or being able to characterise it qua completed conceptual analysis. Another point I have repeatedly referred to is that the ubiquitous nature of causality helps to bolster the case for a metaphysics of causality. It becomes less and less plausible that the evolutionary processes our cognitive apparata have gone through could have constructed such a reliable and generally coherent conceptual notion of cause which is nevertheless a radical misrepresentation of the structure of the world.

EE suggests that a strong empirical argument to the conclusion that our conceptual notion of causation accurately mirrors metaphysical facts about the world may be as robust a notion of causal realism as we have access to. One moral to draw from this is that further philosophical work should be put towards clarifying what kinds of demands for realism can be legitimately placed on projects of naturalization. EE suggests that a completed naturalistic account may give us a strong guarantee of causal realism without yielding a full and explicit specification of the metaphysical structure of the world. This may be more a lesson to be learned than a weakness in the account.

Notes

¹ Borrowing from Salmon’s introduction is not to draw any parallels between his account of causality and those explored in this paper

² A similar point is made, with classic examples, in Churchland’s “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes”. While I suspect Churchland’s arguments based on actual historical cases may be indicative of some underlying currents in contemporary analytic thought, I am not claiming that his *eliminativism* of the time is representative of the current philosophical climate. So, for instance, I leave it open whether evidence suggesting something other than a one-to-one relation between causal concepts and entities belonging to some ‘lower level’ taxonomy commits a realist about causation to the elimination of the ‘higher level’ taxonomy.

³ This section is not intended to be taken as a fully rigorous argument but rather as a suggestive starting point for further analysis, in particular that which takes

place in the following section couched in the terms of objections and replies.

⁴ This is, of course, somewhat of an oversimplification but it will do for the point at hand.

⁵ This sort of skepticism is apparent, for example, in Ruse's paper "Does Evolutionary Epistemology Imply Realism?".

⁶ In fact for Hull the traditional "hierarchy of levels" becomes irrelevant. Rather then define evolutionary entities in terms of their status as genes, species, individuals etc. Hull treats the entities as defined in terms of the evolutionary process(es) they are taking part in (401-7).

⁷ I am borrowing this term from Terrence Deacon's *The Symbolic Species* in which he argues for a complex account of the evolution of language (actually "co-evolution" –roughly: biological and social). In Deacon's account even more primitive than indexical signs are "iconic" signs, or signs that bear a resemblance relation to what they denote.

⁸ A similar point will be raised in the "just-so story" objection.

⁹ It strikes me that this suggests an odd inversion of a normal tendency to direct skepticism primarily towards metaphysical underpinnings rather than conceptual constructs.

¹⁰ Thanks to Margaret Morrison for pointing out this second possibility.

¹¹ This is more or less a direct quote from Fodor but I am unsure of its precise location.

¹² I am using quotation marks because these terms come directly from Millikan (1993). To my knowledge Millikan does not tackle the problem of causality but her account of the normativity inherent in selection history, and in particular how the notion of "proper function" can be used to explain cases of error (her interest is primarily in "misrepresentation") warrants extension into the present context.

¹³ Millikan states: "The definition of proper function may also be read as a theoretical definition of "purpose" (17).

¹⁴ There are several clever formulations of this objection and I will mention one in passing: Edwards Stein argues against what he calls "convergent realism" which he characterises as, "the view that as human beliefs change they make progress towards the truth" (119). He has two arguments: the first being that convergence to truth would require a goal –this I have attempted to deal with in the response to the previous objection—; the second being that, "if we think of selection as a filter, in the case of evolutionary epistemology the filter is too porous to precipitate only true theories—other theories will pass through the filter as well".

¹⁵ This problem comes from Vollmer (74-5) though it should be noted that my treatment varies significantly from his.

¹⁶ For example see Gopnik's "Explanation as Orgasm" which I have referred to earlier.

¹⁷ For example, Kauffman's introduction contains the following:

Since Darwin, we turn to a single, singular force, Natural Selection, which we might as well capitalise as though it were the new deity. Random variation, selection-sifting. Without it, we reason, there would be nothing but incoherent disorder.

I shall argue in this book that this idea is wrong. For, as we shall see, the emerging sciences of complexity begin to suggest that order is not at all accidental... Laws of complexity spontaneously generate much of the order of the natural world (8).

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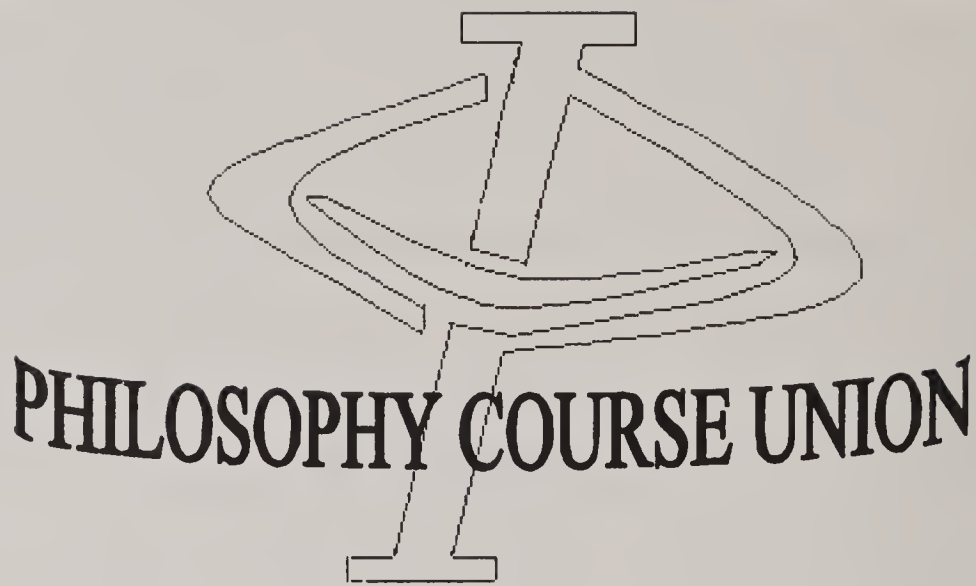
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